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Italy from Liberalism to Fascism

1870-1925

Christopher Seton-Watson

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First published in 1967, *Italy from Liberalism to Fascism* is essentially the political history of Italy, concerned with both domestic and foreign policy and their interaction. Designed in chronological order, the book is divided into four parts: the consolidation of Italy after its unification; the stresses and strains the country went through; the expansion of liberalism; and the onset and development of fascism. This seminal book on the history of Italy will be of interest to students of history and political science.

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PREFACE

This book has been a long time in the making. It could perhaps be said to have started with the purchase at Blackwells in the autumn of 1943 of Cecil Sprigge's *Development of Modern Italy*, which had then just appeared. Sprigge's volume subsequently travelled with me from Cassino to Bologna during the final fifteen months of the Italian campaign. At that time there seemed little connexion between the pre-fascist Italy that Sprigge described and the prostrate and devastated Italy that confronted the wartime British soldier. Only later, during the visits which took me to every region of Italy in the first ten post-war years, did I come to understand that connexion and to appreciate the continuity in Italy's modern history.

In 1946, when I began to teach in Oxford, I found that Italy constituted a serious gap in the English historical literature on Europe since 1870. Neither Croce nor Sprigge satisfied the needs of the enterprising undergraduate who had no knowledge of the Italian language. It was primarily for such a person that this book was written. Since it was started, Dennis Mack Smith's *Italy* and John A. Thayer's *Italy and the Great War* have appeared. These two studies cover much of the ground but do not wholly fill the gap. I believe there is still room for a different interpretation, with different emphases, different partialities and, doubtless, different prejudices.

One third of the first draft was written in 1953 during a sabbatical term at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton. My debt to the Institute, and in particular to the late Edward M. Earle, at that time director of its History Department, is very great. From 1959 to 1964 I held a Special Lecturership in the Faculty of Social Studies in Oxford. I am most grateful to my colleagues on the Faculty Board for appointing me to this post which, by reducing my tutorial load, allowed me to make substantial progress with my writing.

This is a political history. The economic and social sections make no pretence to comprehensiveness; they are intended merely to provide the minimum framework within which political events become intelligible. Cultural history receives scant attention. Croce and Labriola, D'Annunzio and Gentile, Gramsci and Salvemini appear in these pages in their political

roles or as commentators on political events, not as scholars, poets or philosophers. Such limitations were essential if fifty-five years of political history were to be treated in substantial depth within the confines of a single volume.

Few historians concerned with recent times can escape moments of despair at the volume of material that threatens to swamp them. In Italy since 1945 the flow of publication and documentation on the post-Risorgimento period, pent up for twenty years by the constraints of fascism, has been especially formidable. It shows no sign of slackening and is already too great for one individual to master. With the exception of certain Foreign Office files on the years 1890–8, consulted in the Public Record Office, I have relied wholly on published material, much of it still little known outside Italy. My indebtedness to fellow historians is, I hope, fully documented. What cannot be documented is what I have learnt from my travels in Italy, from observation of its physical and human landscape, and from much talking with patient Italian colleagues and friends. To this must be added my debt to those fellow students and lovers of Italy with whom I have argued and exchanged ideas over the years in Oxford, in London and in many other places. Without their encouragement this book could never have been written.

MARCH 1967

ORIEL COLLEGE
OXFORD

PROLOGUE

UNIFICATION

1859–70

The Makers of Italy

The unification of Italy was the joint achievement of the liberal monarchist moderates and the revolutionary democrats: two political groupings differing widely in programme and temperament which emerged from the confused failure of 1848 and worked together uneasily for the same end. Both drew their leaders, like other national movements in nineteenth-century Europe, predominantly from the propertied and professional middle class. There were few working-men, and fewer aristocrats, among the makers of Italy. The contribution of the peasantry was negligible. National sentiment was perhaps strongest among students and young university graduates, who were prominent in the rank and file of Garibaldi's volunteers. Lawyers, doctors, journalists and teachers were fired by the vision of a united Italy which would free them from their intellectual frustrations and provide new, more rewarding outlets for their constructive energy. Their idealism was powerfully reinforced by the more calculating ambitions of merchants, bankers and manufacturers, who looked forward impatiently to the prosperity which they believed an Italian customs union would bring. An essential role was played by the Piedmontese House of Savoy, for which the plains of northern Italy were the traditional target of dynastic ambition. To all these must be added the foreign patrons of Italy's Risorgimento: Napoleon III, who provided the military force which Italians did not possess, and the British Liberal statesmen without whose moral support Italy might have been born not independent, but a satellite of imperial France. Without foreign assistance unification could never have been achieved so rapidly and at such an astonishingly low cost in human life.[1]

Among the democrats Mazzini was the outstanding figure. He was the prophet who in the dark days kept faith in the future alive and made national unity a religion. He so influenced a whole generation that compromise schemes for confederations, or for a peninsula divided between several kingdoms, never found sufficient supporters. His teaching is summed up in his own famous phrase, 'God and the People', and in his conception of the proletariat as 'a tide moved by the divine breath'. His faith in the People, in its revolutionary possibilities and its capacity for self-government, was fundamental. From it followed logically his republicanism and his anti-clericalism, for both monarchy and the church were institutions that came between God and the People and restricted the

[1] The total casualties of the regular and volunteer forces between 1848 and 1870 have been estimated at 6,000 dead and 20,000 wounded.

latter's freedom. For Mazzini the triumph of the national principle and the redemption of the proletariat were inseparably linked. Further, the creation of a united Italy, with the Third Rome of the People as its capital, would, by liberating the Italian people for its mission, be but the first step towards a new fraternal world of democratic nations.

Mazzini lived most of his life in exile and conspiracy, among political abstractions. As a politician and man of action, except for the brief glory of the Roman Republic of 1849, he was an utter failure. Few of his followers understood him and none could rise to his philosophic and religious heights. He died in 1872, a lonely and embittered old man, abandoned by all his prominent disciples.

Mazzini nevertheless left a permanent mark on the Italian democratic tradition. Faith in popular initiative and enthusiasm did not fade, and throughout modern Italian history there recurs, in successive programmes of the left, the hope that a wholly new Italy could be fashioned by a great upsurge of the People. Enthusiasm as a substitute for organisation, amateurishness and a consistent underestimating of obstacles remained characteristic of many politicians of the left. This naivety showed clearly in their taste for conspiracy, their exaltation of the voluntary spirit and their distrust of diplomacy. Conspiracy was in their blood and too often was considered sufficient preparation for a revolution. A voluntary citizen militia was the only safe form of military organisation, because regular armies were dynastic and militarist institutions. Red shirts and picturesque hats, high ideals and reckless personal bravery could achieve more than military training and discipline. Diplomacy, too, was dynastic, aristocratic and therefore suspect. As the name they gave their party implies – the Party of Action – they believed in deeds, not words, in battle, not negotiation. The many concessions that had to be made to international reality in the course of the Risorgimento seemed to Italian democrats just plain treachery to the national cause. In later years one of the bitterest accusations that they hurled against Cavour and his successors was that of 'diplomatising the revolution'.

The moderates became an effective political force after 1848, in the reaction against the disunity and regional rivalries, the unskilled leadership and unplanned enthusiasm which had ruined the Italian cause in that year. They were the party of caution, with a well-developed sense of the practicable. Monarchist because the monarchy was a bulwark of social stability, they insisted that Italy should be unified by respectable methods, without disorder and with at least an appearance of legality. This meant setting clear limits to the national revolution and killing such dangerous ideas as land reform. On the other hand they were modern in their outlook, with a high respect for efficiency and a keen interest in agricultural improve-

ment, railways and trade. The essential tools of unification seemed to them to be a strong regular army, an efficient bureaucracy and a well-organised police force able to keep popular enthusiasm within bounds. Most important of all, their European contacts had given them a realistic vision of the international situation. Being aware of the smallness of Piedmont and the military weakness of the Italian unitary movement, they saw the necessity for diplomacy and foreign aid.

Cavour dominated the moderates to an even greater extent than Mazzini dominated the democrats. He became Piedmontese Prime Minister in 1852, and with only one short break remained in power continuously until his death in June 1861, becoming in March of that year the first Premier of united Italy. In his zeal for modernisation, his faith in constitutional monarchy and his understanding of the diplomatic game he had no rival. His study of British and French politics had made him a free trader and a strong admirer of Peel. He realised that among the first needs of the future Italy would be schools, roads, canals and railways, and in the years 1850–9 he did his utmost, with the help of French and other foreign capital, to equip Piedmont with them. Cavour never shrank from paying the price of this development, in the shape of high taxation, budgetary strain and a mounting national debt. His political programme was reform, not revolution. He abhorred the very word revolution and did not hesitate to repress the republican movement, even at the cost of straining the constitution. His liberalism was that of post-1832 Britain and Louis Philippe's France: he saw his task as the progressive liberalisation of the 1848 Piedmontese constitution and its defence against the two extremes of clerical conservatism and revolutionary democracy. His diplomatic task was to win the respect of western Europe and convince his potential allies that Piedmont was a reliable, progressive state. In his speeches and diplomatic notes Cavour repeatedly stressed the contrast between the efficiency and orderly constitutional development of his country and the dangers of disorder and revolution inherent in Austrian repression and papal misgovernment. Such arguments were well designed to appeal to British opinion, and when the time came Cavour was able to successfully represent unification as a conservative process.

By 1859 he had made Piedmont a going concern and the pet of western Europe. Though tucked away in the far north-west, with only five million inhabitants against Austria's thirty-two, and with a population which to a Neapolitan seemed half French, it had yet securely won the leadership of the Italian national movement. Turin was already in some sense the capital of Italy, to which exiles flocked from Venice, from the Papal States, from Naples and from Sicily. The moderates had been in origin Piedmontese and were always predominantly northern: but Cavour, who refused to

admit a clash between Piedmontese and Italian interests, had greatly weakened Piedmontese particularism. By winning the respect and collaboration of men such as Minghetti at Bologna and Ricasoli in Tuscany, he had transformed his group into the nucleus of a truly Italian party. Growing numbers of republicans were acknowledging his leadership and that of monarchical Piedmont, the only part of Italy where liberal institutions had been tried and proved.

Cavour's diplomatic achievement will always rank beside Bismarck's as a masterpiece of the nineteenth century. Probably it should rank higher, for Cavour had far slenderer material resources than Bismarck's to back his diplomacy. Italy could not be unified against both Austrian and French opposition, still less against a combination of Austria, France and Britain. The first step was therefore the French alliance. Cavour understood Napoleon III as did few foreigners: he saw how the Emperor was torn between Napoleonic ambition, romantic attachment to the principle of nationality and the need to appease French Catholics. Napoleon III was a half-hearted friend of Italy, but Cavour saw that his army was necessary to break the tough crust of Austrian power. In 1859 the French, with Piedmontese help, expelled the Austrians from Lombardy. For this, and for Napoleon III's grudging consent to the annexation of central Italy, Cavour was prepared in 1860 to pay a stiff price – the cession to France of Nice and Savoy, and renunciation for the time being of Venice and Rome. With the north and centre secured, all eyes in Italy turned south. Cavour now found himself squeezed between Napoleon III and the Party of Action led by Garibaldi. If he tried to suppress the democratic movement and left the Kingdom of Naples in peace, leadership of the Italian cause would pass out of the hands of the monarchy and the moderates; the threat of revolution, not for the first or last time, spurred the House of Savoy into action. If on the other hand he openly supported the democrats, who were straining at the leash to get at the Bourbons and the Pope, he might create just that hostile combination of all the conservative powers of Europe that would be fatal to his further plans. After months of doubt and danger, Cavour succeeded in mastering the situation and harnessing the revolutionary movement to his purpose.

Garibaldi was the key to the problem. He and Cavour were never on better than speaking terms. Cavour could not forget Garibaldi's association with Mazzini in Rome in 1849; Garibaldi could not forgive the cession of his birthplace, Nice, to France. From the conflict between them, Italy was created, each playing an essential part in the process which the other was incapable of playing. Fortunately Garibaldi and King Victor Emmanuel II had learnt to respect each other. By adopting the slogan 'Italy and Victor Emmanuel' in 1857, Garibaldi became the link between the Party of Action

and the moderates, and his example reconciled many republicans to serving a king. He and the Thousand sailed from Genoa in May 1860 against the wishes of Cavour, to whom the expedition seemed reckless folly. But as first Sicily, then the Neapolitan mainland, went down before the redshirts like the walls of Jericho before Joshua, Cavour saw and brilliantly seized his opportunity. He was determined to put the brake on the forces of revolution and keep them away from Rome, guarded by a French garrison; at the same time he was resolved to secure the fruits of Garibaldi's triumphs. In September 1860, after all other expedients had failed, the King issued a proclamation, addressed as much to France and Britain as to Italians, on the need to restore the principles of moral order and preserve Europe from the continual dangers of revolution and war; then the Piedmontese army marched down the whole length of the peninsula, occupied the south and brought the revolution to an end. Cavour thus won, at the cost of the bitter enmity of Garibaldi and the Party of Action. With the annexation of Sicily, Naples and more than half the Papal States, the Kingdom of Italy was born.

Cavour died on 6 June 1861 with unification still incomplete. For the next nine years the need to win Venice and Rome overshadowed all other problems. Their acquisition was regarded by the makers of Italy as essential, for historical and sentimental reasons. Venetia was also necessary to give the new kingdom military security from the north-east. Moreover, when Cavour proclaimed Rome as the capital of Italy in March 1861 in the first Italian parliament, more than sentiment lay behind his action: he saw that only the acquisition of Rome could quell the growing antagonisms between Turin and Milan and Florence and Naples, which threatened to undermine Italian unity.

Cavour and his successors insisted that Italy could reach Rome only with French consent. They put their trust in peaceful methods, in *mezzi morali*, believing that, given time and patience, papal Rome could not indefinitely resist the attraction of liberal Italy. But an essential first step was to have the French garrison removed. The September Convention of 1864 achieved this object, at a price: Napoleon III undertook to withdraw his troops within two years on condition that Italy guaranteed the frontiers of the reduced Papal State and moved the Italian capital from Turin to Florence, as a proof that the renunciation of Rome was in earnest. In this agreement there was a fatal ambiguity. The Italian government signed because it looked on Florence as a step on the road from Turin to Rome. Napoleon III signed in the belief that Florence would block the road to Rome. There was only one solution to this situation that could satisfy both sides – a genuinely spontaneous revolution inside Rome and a vote for union with Italy, which would have made it possible for the Emperor to

abandon the Pope in spite of the rage of his clerical supporters. But this *deus ex machina* was never to appear.

To the Party of Action this deference to the French Emperor seemed treachery. Garibaldi's veterans were itching to repeat their exploits of 1860: they could not pack away their red shirts and settle down to civilian life while Rome was still unredeemed. Garibaldi's popularity was such that he overshadowed the governments which succeeded Cavour's. They, like Cavour in 1860, were squeezed between Napoleon III and the Party of Action, and not all of them had the skill or courage to keep Garibaldi under control. Rattazzi in particular, who was Prime Minister in 1862 and 1867, lowered Italy in the eyes of Europe by his indecision and weakness. Hoping to repeat Cavour's triumph of 1860, he twice turned a blind eye to Garibaldi's preparations for invading the Papal State, intending later to intervene in the name of order and annex Rome with European consent. Such weakness at the top affected the army and all levels of the state administration: officers and civil servants gave help to the volunteers in the belief that the government wished its hands to be forced and would condone any *fait accompli.* On both occasions the weakness of toleration was followed by the weakness of repression. In 1862 Garibaldi's expedition ended in a clash with Italian troops on Aspromonte in southern Calabria. In 1867 his invasion of the Papal State ended in the rout of his redshirts by French and papal forces at Mentana, twenty miles north of Rome. Order was restored by the Italian army and for the next two years Italy was ruled by authoritarian, military methods that were hard to reconcile with Cavour's constitutional liberalism.

The years 1866–70 were an unhappy contrast to the glorious years 1859–61. In 1866 Venice was won, but thanks only to a Prussian victory in Bohemia, after the Italian army and navy had suffered humiliating defeats by the Austrians at Custoza and Lissa. In 1867 the fiasco of Mentana brought a French garrison back to Rome less than a year after it had been evacuated. In 1870 Italy reached Rome at last, not through the triumph of *mezzi morali* nor by a rising of the Roman People, nor even through an invasion by Garibaldi's veterans, but thanks once again to Prussian victories, this time on the Rhine and in the Ardennes.

The Church

The makers of Italy were forced into anti-clericalism by the Papacy's unrelenting opposition to national unification. The democrats were anti-clerical by conviction and few of them shared even Mazzini's deistic faith. Atheism and Darwinian materialism flourished among them; many were freemasons and fought the spiritual authority of the church as resolutely as they fought its temporal power. But the majority of the

moderates were devout Catholics. For them Article I of the Piedmontese constitution, which declared that Catholicism was 'the sole religion of the State', was no empty formula. But they drew a distinction between the Catholic faith and the temporal power of the Papacy, and refused to accept the church's official claim that the latter was a necessary guarantee of spiritual independence.

Early hopes of papal leadership of the Italian cause had foundered with Pius IX's allocution of 29 April 1848, which condemned the idea of a national war against Austria. But Cavour dreamed of achieving harmony between the church and Italy on different lines. His formula 'A free church in a free state'[1] summed up his hopes of reconciling the church and liberty, Catholicism and the nineteenth century, the rights of the nation and the freedom of the Pope, while simultaneously disarming the hostility of foreign Catholics to Italy. The Pope, in his view, could safely abandon his temporal power, for his independence would be better guarded by the love and respect of 22 million Italians than by 25,000 bayonets; and the spiritual strength of the church could only grow if the Pope were freed from the incubus of temporal power and so made immune to criticism for shortcomings as a secular ruler. When the church had renounced political power, then the state could safely renounce its controls over the church and allow it to order its own affairs without either the privileges or the restrictions of a Concordat. Cavour believed that 'the era of Concordats' was over. He saw that the solution of the problem of church and state, and the Italian acquisition of Rome, were two parts of a single question. He dreamed of signing, 'from the heights of the Campidoglio . . . a new religious peace, a treaty which will have a greater effect upon the future of human society than the Peace of Westphalia'.[2] But in his optimism he overestimated the strength of Liberal Catholicism and of the clergy with nationalist sympathies. Neither the Papacy nor the anti-clerical patriots were in the mood for compromise and his dream of reconciling church and state came to nothing. On his deathbed in June 1861 almost his last words, spoken in delirium, were 'A free church in a free state'. Three months earlier his negotiations with the Papacy had broken down.

The democrats denounced the formula 'free church in a free state' as a dangerous illusion, which in practice would mean a state within the state, 'a church free to attack the free state'. Instead they demanded the retention and tightening of existing controls over the church. Inevitably this view gained supporters among the moderates also, as clerical opposition

[1] He borrowed it from the French Liberal Catholic writer, Montalembert.

[2] Quoted in S. W. Halperin, *The Separation of Church and State in Italian Thought from Cavour to Mussolini* (Chicago 1937), p. 11. The Campidoglio is the Capitoline Hill.

to the constitution and the national movement grew more bitter. It was under the guidance of Cavour himself that a long series of secularist laws was passed in Piedmont between 1850 and 1859. The clergy lost most of their ancient privileges, religious orders were suppressed or deprived of their property, monasteries and convents were closed, civil marriage was introduced and church schools subjected to state control. This legislation was extended to the rest of Italy after 1860 and made more rigorous. In 1866 part of the revenue from confiscated church property was paid into a special Ecclesiastical Fund, administered by laymen, which equalised the stipends of the clergy and enabled the state to end its direct subsidy to the church. Further, religious orders were forbidden to acquire real property in the future. There was nothing novel about such legislation in western Europe; but the tension it created between the church and the 'persecutor' Italian state was such that in 1865 nearly half the sees of Italy were without bishops (though a partial understanding on this point was reached in the following year). Cavour did not have time to resolve this ambiguity between the political sovereignty of the state and the independence of the church, nor to work out the implications of separation, which, to be effective, required a mutual limitation of freedom by both sides. His successors continued to work for a settlement. In 1867 Bettino Ricasoli, Cavour's disciple in ecclesiastical matters, presented parliament with a Free Church Bill which would have gone far towards separating church and state; but the outcry was such that he fell from power. This killed all hope of reconciliation. It is unlikely that even Cavour, had he lived, could have persuaded Italian patriots to renounce voluntarily their control over an institution which proclaimed itself the implacable enemy of liberalism and of Italy. Few even of the moderates were prepared to concede more than freedom within limits strictly defined by the state.

The seizure of half the Papal States by Piedmont in 1860, and the Italian threat to the remainder of his temporal kingdom, turned Pius IX finally against every manifestation of the liberal spirit and against every new idea. His resistance to Italian unification was only one aspect on the political plane of the far deeper struggle between the Catholic church and the 'revolution', between Catholic doctrine and 'the errors of the century', between faith and reason. The Risorgimento appeared to Pius IX no more than the advance guard of militant liberalism, a synthesis of all current heresies, 'the triumph of disorder and the victory of the most perfidious revolution'.[1] The Syllabus of Errors of 1864, reinforced by the proclamation of papal infallibility in 1870, was both a direct challenge to the Italian

[1] Spadolini, *L'opposizione cattolica*, pp. 38, 121–4. For an able and reasoned exposition by an English Catholic historian of the motives behind the Syllabus, see E. E. Y. Hales, *Pio Nono* (London 1954), pp. 257–62.

state and a declaration of war on nineteenth-century liberalism. The Syllabus rejected reconciliation or compromise 'with progress, with liberalism and with modern civilisation'. It condemned freedom of conscience and worship, the sovereignty of the secular state and the latter's claims to a monopoly of education and jurisdiction in matrimonial matters, and reaffirmed the intangibility of the temporal power. The infallibility decree was the culminating step in a long process of defining doctrine, centralising authority and enforcing discipline within the church. The influence of Liberal Catholics and of the clergy with national sympathies, among whom were six cardinals, was systematically destroyed. The Syllabus confronted every Catholic with a clear choice, 'either liberal or Catholic, either Catholic or liberal'; for to profess Liberal Catholicism was, in Pius IX's own words, 'to embrace simultaneously God and the devil'.[1]

The church fought back with every weapon at its disposal. Victor Emmanuel, his ministers and all who shared responsibility for secularist legislation were excommunicated. Pius IX refused to recognise the new state, even to the extent of never referring to the Italian Kingdom, but always to the 'Subalpine usurper'.[2] In 1857 a Piedmontese priest-journalist, Don Giacomo Margotti, had devised the formula 'Neither elected nor electors' and urged abstention from the polls. Many Catholics followed his advice after 1861, believing that to vote would constitute recognition of the Italian state. In 1866 the Holy Penitentiary declared that Catholics might sit in parliament only if they took the oath with the reservation *salvis legibus divinis et ecclesiasticis*. This reservation the chamber of deputies refused to accept. In the years 1860–70 the Papacy encouraged and sought the help of every enemy of Italy, both internal and external. In the disordered south the Bourbon cause was upheld against the Piedmontese usurpers.[3] In the north, especially in Emilia, opportunities were found for agitation among peasants exasperated by taxation.[4] The priest, who before 1860 had been a supporter of peace and order in the countryside, now became a disturbing and subversive element. In towns such as Milan and Florence, too, where social unrest was growing, there were priests and agitators and clerical journalists who propounded revolutionary slogans so similar to those of the extreme left that frightened liberals suspected a secret alliance between the socialists and the Vatican, between the Red and Black Internationals.[5]

But internal allies were insufficient. Pius IX never wavered in his claim to the temporal power, right down to its destruction on 20 September 1870.

[1] Spadolini, *L'opposizione cattolica*, p. 124.

[2] Only in Piedmont, and in Lombardy and Venetia, which had been legally ceded by treaty, was the government recognised as legitimate.

[3] See below, p. 26. [4] See below, p. 27. [5] Chabod, *Storia*, p. 404.

He believed that without it the Pope would become merely 'the Grand Chaplain of the House of Savoy'; and for the sake of his spiritual independence, the renunciation by the population of Rome of its political liberty and national aspirations seemed a small sacrifice to ask. But the temporal power survived for ten years after 1860 only because France was its protector. Fortunately for Italy, the Papacy in 1870 was more isolated than at any time since the first stirrings of Italian nationalism. The proclamation of papal infallibility had made even Catholic governments anxious. Austria-Hungary had a liberal, Protestant foreign minister and had recently denounced the Concordat of 1855. Spain, a republic since 1868, was friendly to Italy. When the French Empire collapsed under Prussia's battering and the French garrison was finally withdrawn from Rome, there was no European Power prepared to take effective steps to halt the march of the Italian army.[1]

The Institutions

It was in the decade 1860–70 that the framework of the modern Italian state was constructed, with little publicity and little discussion, even in parliament. Public opinion was concerned with the immediate problems of Venice and Rome and the Pope; it was little interested in constitutional and administrative questions which, it was argued, would have to await solution until unification was complete. But there were innumerable problems which could not wait, on which quick decisions were necessary. These decisions, at the time that they were made, in an atmosphere of internal strain and international tension, might be regarded as provisional: but, as so often happens, the provisional became permanent. By the time Rome had been won and the excitement was over, the Italian state had been moulded in its essential outlines and politicians, administrators and private citizens were already settling down into that mould. Very few voices were raised after 1870 to demand a re-examination of the foundations on which the new kingdom had been constructed.

Inevitably in such circumstances the state was built from above by Cavour's party, the Right, which was then in power.[2] Inevitably, also, the Piedmontese undertook a major share of the work and Italy was fashioned on Piedmontese lines. It would have been folly to neglect the working model which lay ready to hand and launch out on risky experiments in govern-

[1] The only government to break off relations with Italy in 1870 was that of Ecuador. Spadolini, *L'opposizione cattolica*, p. 627.

[2] After 1861 the moderates became generally known as the Right, the democrats or Party of Action as the Left; but the conventional categories of 'conservative' and 'progressive' fitted neither exactly.

ment. What Mazzini and the democrats had feared, did to a large extent occur. Italy was 'Piedmontised', not built by the People on new foundations. Lombardy, central and southern Italy, and later Venice and Rome, were annexed before elections were held, so that there was no chance for constituent assemblies to lay down terms for unification, as the Left had so ardently desired. It is true that in each case annexation was confirmed by plebiscites and universal suffrage. This was the Right's concession to democratic sentiment, a compromise which later received constitutional sanction in the new royal title assumed by Victor Emmanuel – 'King by the grace of God and by the will of the Nation'. But plebiscites for or against 'Italy and Victor Emmanuel', held in the flush of victory, were no substitute for elections and gave no guidance as to the feelings of the public with regard to the future organisation of Italy. And though Victor Emmanuel consented to be called King by the will of the Nation, it was significant that he insisted on remaining Victor Emmanuel II, even though he was the first King of Italy.

Massimo D'Azeglio's much quoted epigram of 1860, 'Italy is made; now we must make Italians', drew attention to what many of the makers of Italy had overlooked. Italy had been transformed from a geographical expression into a political entity, but the work of fusing its heterogeneous regions and populations had hardly begun. Parochialism and provincialism were deep-seated, reinforced by the still living traditions of the Renaissance Communes. Few outside the restricted educated class thought of themselves as primarily Italians. Among the people there was not even a common language. Piedmont and Lombardy were divided from Naples and Sicily not only by physical space but by the space of centuries. Even inside the former political units there were fierce rivalries: Genoa against Turin, Leghorn against Florence, traditionally separatist Sicily against the Neapolitan mainland. Close beneath the enthusiasm for unity had always lain important regional differences of outlook. Many Tuscans among the moderates feared that their duchy, rich and pleasantly stagnant, would lose by unification with the hustling, hard-headed Piedmontese. Lombards, accustomed under Austrian rule, whatever its shortcomings, to an efficient administration and the beginnings of commercial prosperity, might well ask themselves how fusion with the papal and Bourbon south would affect them. The Piedmontese, too, had their doubts. Many foresaw with apprehension the loss of their national individuality and the family atmosphere of their ruling class; and after a glorious decade in which they had occupied the centre of the Italian stage, the future seemed to promise only an insignificant minor role far from the centre of national life and political power.

With the creation of the Italian Kingdom in 1861 these regional rivalries, which had paralysed Italy in 1848, once again came to the surface. The

first important political realignment after 1860 appeared inside the Right and split it along regional lines, between the Piedmontese Permanente and the Lombard-Tuscan Consorteria. The Permanente watched jealously over Piedmontese interests, in 'permanent' opposition to any government which attempted to transfer the capital anywhere but to Rome. In 1864 the September Convention was signed by a government which contained not a single Piedmontese; and the news of the transfer of the capital to Florence was greeted by bloody riots and clashes with the police and army in the streets of Turin. Twelve years later it was the turn of the Tuscans who, resentful at the losses incurred by Florence when the capital moved on to Rome, once again disrupted the Right and brought about its final downfall in 1876. Italian politics from the start took on a sectional character which has not disappeared even today.

It was in the south that the protests against Piedmontisation were loudest. A horde of Piedmontese administrators and policemen and soldiers had descended upon Naples in 1860 to restore order out of the Bourbon collapse. What they found there appalled them. With northern energy and thoroughness, with little tact and all the paternalism characteristic of the Right, they set about bringing modern civilisation to a 'medieval' land of barbarism and corruption. The Neapolitan and Sicilian liberals who returned at the same time, after twelve or more years of exile, were scarcely more tactful or closer in touch with southern feelings. Cavour recognised that to harmonise north and south was as difficult a task as to wage war on Austria or overcome the hostility of the church. His prescription was strong honest government, not martial law. 'Anyone can govern by martial law', he repeated on his deathbed; 'I will govern them with liberty'. His lieutenants and successors were not always so scrupulous and the brigands were suppressed by the army with a savagery that is still remembered in peasant legend. The south was treated as a semi-colonial territory. It was not surprising that, like many semi-colonial peoples, southerners were soon contrasting unfavourably the efficiency of a 'foreign' administration with their former government, which, though inefficient and arbitrary, had at least been 'native'.

The rulers of Italy, for forty years to come, were to be obssessed with the precariousness of their position. They realised only too well that unification had been the work of an enlightened minority; the masses, particularly in the countryside, remained 'outside' the state. Every act of government was seen as an episode in a continuous war of defence on two fronts: on the right against the church with its allies abroad; on the left against republicanism and the forces of social revolution. Fear of these enemies explains the extreme centralisation which was introduced. The Piedmontese system of local government had been modelled on that of

Napoleonic France. The country had been divided into provinces of roughly equal size (the equivalent of the French *département*), each with its prefect, and communes of widely differing size but identical powers and organisation, each with its mayor (*sindaco*). Both prefect and *sindaco* were appointed and controlled by the Minister of Interior. In 1859 this system was hurriedly extended to Lombardy. The many protests and grumblings forced the government to set up a special commission to reconsider the whole question of local government. In February 1861 the Minister of Interior, Minghetti, presented to parliament a bill which in its main outlines had received the approval of Cavour. It provided for the creation of a new unit of government, the region, between the central government and the province, subject, in the wide spheres of activity delegated to it, to only general supervision by the central government. Minghetti's view was that by thus providing outlets for local energy and patriotism, the unity of Italy would be exposed to fewer strains than if an attempt was made to stifle all separatist forces by rigid centralisation. It was significant that Minghetti was a native of Bologna and a future leader of the non-Piedmontese Consorteria. But parliament, appalled by reports of southern corruption and depravity, and fearing that regional assemblies would perpetuate the internal feuds of old Italy, rejected the bill by a huge majority. In September 1861 a standardised system of local government was introduced which divided Italy into 59 provinces[1] governed by prefects. In later years schemes of decentralisation repeatedly found their place in programmes of democratic reform, but never reached the statute book. The explanation is the same as that for the rejection of Minghetti's scheme in 1861 – fear of undermining the fragile unity of the nation.[2]

The Piedmontese constitution of 1848, which in 1861 became the constitution of Italy, was modelled on that of France of 1830: 'a constitution', said its critics, 'imported from England in a bad French translation'. It established a limited constitutional monarchy in which executive power lay in the hands of the King. The elementary political liberties were guaranteed, a senate appointed by the crown had powers equal to those of the chamber of deputies, and the franchise was restricted by a stiff property or income qualification. The preamble stated that it was 'perpetual and irrevocable'; but Cavour's opinion that it could, and should, be improved was that of the majority of liberals. In fact, like most of the liberal constitutions of western Europe, it evolved slowly but surely in the direction of parliamentary and cabinet government.

[1] 69 after the acquisition of Venetia and Rome.

[2] Since 1948 the regional reorganisation of Italy has been enshrined in the new republican constitution, but in 1967, for the same reasons, has only in part been carried out.

The crown was no constitutional cypher. Victor Emmanuel II came from a long line of stubborn, paternal despots; he attached much importance to the traditions of his House and intended to rule. But although he had the strongest reservations about 'the constitutional system' and greatly disliked the lawyers, journalists and parliamentary orators who had come to the fore in 1848, he also had a shrewd understanding of the times in which he lived. Louis Philippe, not Charles X, was his model. The constitution gave him ample powers. His choice of prime minister was never a formality, and he was free to grant or refuse a dissolution. The atmosphere of his court was military and in times of crisis he tended to turn to Piedmontese generals.[1] The early years of the constitution abound in instances of the free use of the royal power. During the climax of the Risorgimento he conducted a personal foreign policy which was not always that of Cavour, and in 1870 he again resorted to dynastic diplomacy, behind the backs of his ministers. His religious scruples and his personal regard for Pius IX, with whom he corresponded throughout his reign, made him a moderating influence in problems of church and state. While Cavour was alive and master of parliament, the King's freedom was limited; but he chafed at control and his actions after 1861 showed that what he was forced to tolerate in Cavour, he was not disposed to tolerate in Cavour's less forceful successors. After 1870 the power of parliament grew at the expense of the crown; but right down to the fascist conquest of power the King continued to play an active political role, especially in foreign and military matters. Few prime ministers chose their foreign or service ministers without first making sure of the royal approval.

Under the electoral law inherited from Piedmont, only 529,000 adult males, less than 2% of the total population, had the right to vote in 1870.[2] In many constituencies, until the extension of the franchise in 1882, the total poll amounted to only a few hundreds. For many years after unification over one-third of the electorate habitually abstained. The voters in the small towns, especially in the south, were well known and easily influenced by the local magnates, who acted as 'grand electors'.[3] But the man who really counted at election time was the prefect. He had many weapons at his disposal. Votes could be won by the promise of political preferment, a decoration, a job in the administration, or money for public works in the

[1] He appointed General La Marmora in 1864 to carry out the September Convention and General Menabrea in 1867 to restore order after Mentana.

[2] To qualify for the vote it was necessary (with a few exceptions) to be over 25, to be able to read and write, and to pay a minimum of 40 lire a year in direct taxes. In 1877–80 26·9% of the population had the vote in France, 20·6% in Germany and 8·8% in the United Kingdom. *Compendio*, I, pp. 68–70.

[3] Until 1919, with the exception of the years 1882–91, the electoral system was that of single-member constituencies, with the second ballot, as in France.

constituency; and the government's enemies could be discouraged by judicious use of the police, by banning political meetings or censoring electoral propaganda. Governments in Italy never lost elections, though an electoral victory rarely guaranteed them a stable parliamentary majority. Centralisation meant that the government, through the Minister of Interior or the Minister of Public Works, had the last word in even trivial local affairs and was the arbiter of parochial politics. Political life became concentrated in parliament and the only means by which local interests could get a hearing was by forcing their deputy to act as their spokesman and protector. Deputies gave or withheld their support from governments according as they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the favours they received for themselves or their constituents. No party in the modern sense, with a nation-wide organisation, existed in Italy before the foundation of the Socialist party in 1892. Prime ministers were therefore forced, in order to maintain themselves in power, to create their majority in parliament by patronage and by ceaseless negotiations with the leaders of the fluctuating regional or personal groupings of deputies. In so far as they had a national policy, it was built up from a jigsaw of disconnected sectional policies.[1]

Cavour set the future pattern of Italian parliamentary life with his famous *connubio*[2] which brought him to power in 1852. This was a coalition between his own Right Centre and the Left Centre under Urbano Rattazzi. It gave him a solid majority for five years until Rattazzi, partly under the influence of the King, abandoned the partnership. Subsequent prime ministers looked back on the *connubio* with envy and were always attempting to repeat the manœuvre. In the Italian parliament, as in Piedmont before 1860, majorities were created by governments, not governments by parliamentary majorities; and the electorate had little say in the choice of a prime minister and none in the composition of the government. In 1852 Cavour's motive was to free himself from dependence on the Piedmontese anti-Italian conservatives on his right and to free Rattazzi from dependence on the democrats and republicans on his left; their combined forces were then able to pursue the 'middle way' against the two extremes. These successful tactics of dividing the opposition and absorbing part of it into the governmental coalition became an accepted part of the parliamentary game.

The emergence of the Permanente and the Consorteria in 1864 marked the final disintegration of the Cavourian majority. Regional discords ushered in a period of parliamentary confusion which gave the King a commanding position for five years. In 1869 the appointment of Lanza as

[1] There are obvious points of similarity between politics in nineteenth-century Italy and eighteenth-century Britain. Depretis at the height of his power was nicknamed by some of his critics 'the Italian Walpole'. See below, p. 91.

[2] Literally, marriage.

Prime Minister ended General Menabrea's two years of authoritarian rule, tolerated by parliament only because, after the fiasco of Mentana, it seemed preferable to mis-government by the Left. Lanza reverted to Cavourian liberalism but failed to build a solid majority. Instability continued for another twelve years until Depretis succeeded in forming a coalition which was another *connubio* in all but name.

The Economy

Italy at its unification was a predominantly agricultural country. Nearly one-third of its area was uncultivated mountain or swamp, one-third hill pasture and forest, and slightly more than one-third under crops. In spite of the poverty of so much of its soil, its population in 1861 was 21·8 millions,[1] living at a higher density than that of either France or Germany. The new state contained a bewildering variety of climate, soil and crop, of standard of living and social structure, from the central European character of Lombardy to the north African squalor of rural Sicily and Calabria. Its economic backwardness was only too apparent. In the whole kingdom there were less than 2,200 kilometres of railways, 1,600 of them in Piedmont and the Po valley. Roads were few and bad, and even the leading ports of Genoa and Naples were primitive. Only 25% of the population over five years of age could read and write, and in the more remote provinces of the south illiteracy was virtually universal. Large areas of the interior lived in primitive isolation and a pre-capitalist, self-sufficient rural economy which had remained unaltered for centuries. Italy had the highest wheat acreage in Europe, in proportion to size, and the lowest wheat yield per acre outside Russia. Except in Piedmont, Lombardy and Tuscany, a class of improving landlords, ready to invest capital in their land, was conspicuously lacking.

Apart from agriculture, natural sources of wealth were few. The mining of Sardinian lead and zinc and Sicilian sulphur was attracting foreign capital, but Italy had virtually no coal and little iron ore. The agricultural population outnumbered the non-agricultural by three to one. Most of those engaged in manufacture worked not in factories but in their own homes, retaining close links with the land, and a high proportion of them were women. In silk production Lombardy and Piedmont led the world; but four-fifths of it was exported raw and only in Piedmont had silk manufacturing begun to take root. There were the beginnings of a cotton industry in Lombardy and of wool manufacturing in eastern Piedmont. But an engineering industry was non-existent outside Milan, Genoa and

[1] 25 millions within the post-1870 frontiers (i.e. with Venetia and Rome included).

Naples, where a handful of arsenals, shipyards and railway workshops had been created and protected, from non-economic motives, by the Austrian administration and the Piedmontese and Neapolitan governments. In industrial production Italy lagged behind not only Britain and France, but also Austria, Belgium and Switzerland. Its industrial revolution was still far in the future.

The young kingdom started its career under the threat of bankruptcy. The cost of war and independence had now to be paid and money raised to provide the essential apparatus of a modern state – a unified army and navy, public works and an efficient administration. In 1862, the first year in which a unified Italian budget was presented, the state's revenue of 450 million lire was less than half its expenditure. For more than ten years the country lived financially from hand to mouth. In such circumstances the post of Minister of Finance was an unenviable one. But Italy was fortunate in the remarkable succession of men who held it during the first fifteen years. The greatest of them was Quintino Sella, the chief hero of 'the heroic period of Italian finance'. He regarded the balancing of the budget as essential for national survival. The new state had to prove that it was not merely the fragile creation of romantic nationalism and foreign patronage, but could hold its own in a competitive, industrial world. If it failed, the fate of Egypt or Tunis awaited it, and effective sovereignty would pass into the hands of foreign bankers and investors.[1] So, with grim determination, Sella and his colleagues of the first decade set about paring down expenditure to a minimum and squeezing the maximum revenue out of a poor country. 'Economy to the bone' was Sella's motto, and he boasted of examining all requests for expenditure 'through a miser's spectacles'. But there was a limit to the economies that could be made. The bureaucracy, however humbly paid and overworked, was bound to grow and to cost more. Heavy expenditure on communications was inevitable, for overriding political and economic reasons. Appropriations for the army and navy were cut down, even in 1865 and 1869, on the eve of the struggle with Austria and the Franco-Prussian war. Even so the war of 1866 sent the deficit soaring to its peak of 740 million lire.

To meet current expenses it was necessary to borrow lavishly, sell state property and pile on the taxes. Borrowing was especially heavy in the years 1861–5, and in a decade the national debt quadrupled and the annual burden of interest payments almost trebled, rising from 21% of total expenditure in 1861–5 to 31% in 1866–70. A substantial proportion of these loans was subscribed from abroad, particularly from France, with the result that Italian financial stability became uncomfortably dependent on foreign

[1] Chabod, *Storia*, pp. 489 ff.

confidence and the state of the Paris Bourse.[1] Italian credit started high in 1861 but by 1865 was becoming exhausted; in 1866 it collapsed. The expectation of war between Italy and Austria, a general European depression, bank failures in Germany and Austria and panic on the stock exchanges, set foreign bondholders clamouring for repayment and Italian bonds tumbling. Faced with financial disaster, the government was compelled to issue a depreciated, non-convertible paper currency. The year 1866 was black for Italy, militarily, politically and financially. Borrowing now became for a time impossible. But the country, thrown back on its own resources, survived the shock, and finance ministers grimly turned elsewhere for the revenue they required.

Part of this was obtained from the disposal of state property. Certain canals and railways built or owned by the state were temporarily handed over to private companies and in 1868 the state tobacco monopoly was farmed out, on terms which brought immediate relief to the exchequer.[2] More important was the sale of expropriated church property and of the demesne lands inherited from the old states, which were thrown on the market, often at depressed prices, to the delight of speculators and the landowning class. It was a shortsighted policy which not even the terrible need for cash could fully excuse.

Taxation however provided most of the funds. In a poor country without industrial and commercial wealth the main burden was inevitably borne by land and by the consumer. Landowners had good reason to protest that 'land was being martyred' when on an average they paid 25% of their income, and sometimes as much as 50%, in government and local taxes. The pocket of the consumer was squeezed even harder. The list of indirect taxes was a long one; among the most severe were those on alcohol, salt and tobacco, the last two being state monopolies. The most hated of all was the grist (*macinato*) tax, levied on all grain ground at the mill and calculated by a mechanical meter attached to the mill wheel. Introduced by Sella in 1868, its virtue from the point of view of a Minister of Finance was that it was simple and easily collected. But it brought more odium upon the country's rulers than all the other taxes combined. Several parts of Italy had suffered from it before unification and its abolition in Sicily in 1860 had been one of Garibaldi's most popular acts. In the north a tax on bread was an innovation and it drove the peasants of Emilia to insurrection.[3] Sella became, in popular legend, 'the starver of the people'. Well might a taxpayer write in 1868 that 'Italy, famous in past ages as a museum of the *beaux arts*, has

[1] Between 1861 and 1870 about one-third of the interest payments on the national debt were made to foreign bondholders.

[2] It returned to direct state administration in 1883.

[3] See below, p. 27.

now become a museum of taxes'. But the heroic effort was not in vain. After 1867 the financial situation gradually improved and by the end of the decade solvency seemed at last within reach.

The continuous financial crisis and the sucking up of savings by taxation and government borrowing starved both agriculture and industry of sorely needed capital. Yet by 1870 Italy had made much progress. Trade was stimulated by the sweeping away of internal customs barriers and by the building of the railways, which continued even in the periods of greatest financial stringency. In the first five years the essential trunk lines were completed and railway mileage was doubled; by the end of 1870 the 2,175 kilometres of January 1861 had grown to 6,208. The leaders of the Right were not dogmatic believers in *laisser faire* and from the first the state played the leading part in railway construction. Foreign capital and foreign contractors had often to be attracted on terms most onerous to the Italian taxpayer, and many lines were uneconomic. But railways were necessary, whatever the cost, to 'stitch the boot of Italy' and bring a breath of modern fresh air into the stagnant south.

Improved communications allowed Italy's foreign trade to expand. The Suez Canal was opened in 1869 and the first Alpine railway tunnel, under Mont Cenis, in 1871. In commercial policy Italy followed the example set by Piedmont under Cavour and adopted tariffs lower than those of any European state except Britain and Belgium. A series of free trade treaties was concluded, the most important of them with France in 1863, which secured for the French one-third of Italy's total foreign trade. In the four years 1867–70 exports were 30% greater, and the excess of imports over exports 60% smaller, than in the previous four years. The south benefited from expanding exports of wine, olive oil, fruit and Sicilian sulphur. Silk increased in importance as the main pillar of Italian foreign trade, accounting in 1867–70 for one-third of both imports and exports. In 1869 the introduction of the first mechanical looms started a process which was soon to turn north Italy into the silk factory of Europe. British-made machinery also laid the foundations of the future cotton and wool manufacturing industries. Imports of coal doubled between 1862 and 1870, and cheaper imported food relieved the Italian consumer. Italy was finding a place in the world economy.

Economic growth, however, brought much dislocation and suffering. A flood of manufactured goods from Britain and France killed old-established domestic handicrafts and deprived the peasant of an important source of income. There was no social legislation to alleviate the resulting misery and emigration, unregulated by the state, was often the only alternative to destitution. The south, being economically weaker, suffered most heavily. The few industries which had been established before

unification, behind protective tariffs, were ruined by foreign and north Italian competition. Carpetbaggers descended from Piedmont and Lombardy to 'reconstruct' the south; northern contractors and speculators snapped up church lands, felled the mountain forests and grew rich from the construction of roads and public works. Naples, with its huge parasitical *lumpenproletariat*, lost the bread and circuses which the Bourbon court had provided and sank to the level of an overgrown provincial city. Mounting taxation brought bitter protests from Neapolitans and Sicilians (and Tuscans), whose former governments may have signally failed to provide the services expected of a modern state, but whose taxes at least had been low. After 1861 they resented being forced to pay for the 'financial extravagance' of the Piedmontese, who had been responsible for over half the initial total of the unified national debt. Southerners had some reason, too, for lamenting that too much of the money they paid out in taxes found its way into the pockets of northern bondholders, contractors and business men. The state's financial policy unintentionally contributed to the draining of wealth from the south.

The decade 1860–70 was one of crisis and struggle, overshadowed by the gradual realisation of Italy's backwardness and natural poverty. During the Risorgimento many northerners had pictured the south as a land of milk and honey, 'the garden of Europe'. Disenchantment came quickly. Soon discouraged voices were heard regretting unification which, it was said, had attached a leaden weight to the feet of the progressive north. The gap between north and south was bridgeable in 1861, if the task had been taken energetically in hand. Cavour had seen that the key to the south's regeneration lay in its economic development and he recognised that special legislation might be necessary for this purpose. But most of his party put their faith in the long-term effects of political and economic liberty, and deprecated the very idea of discrimination by the state in favour of one region. So the gap was allowed to grow ever wider until, in the next century, the full significance of 'the Southern question' was recognised.

Yet the dark side of the picture can be overdrawn. When a fair balance is struck, the first decade appears as one of solid achievement, modest in relation to what still remained to be done, but impressive when the starting-point of 1861 is borne in mind. The privations and sacrifices of 1861–70 bore fruit in the following fifteen years.

The People

The condition of the peasantry varied greatly from region to region. The most prosperous and secure were the tenant farmers of Lombardy and the

sharecroppers (*mezzadri*) of Tuscany. Less happy were the small peasant proprietors, numerous in the Alpine foothills, all down the Apennine backbone and in the rich plains around Naples and Palermo. The most depressed section were the casual landless labourers (*braccianti*) who were found in every part of the country, but particularly in the lower Po valley, the Roman Campagna and the interior of Sicily and the Neapolitan provinces. They made up well over half Italy's agricultural population. Living close to the destitution line, they found work for 100, perhaps 200 days in the year. Among them malaria and pellagra[1] were rife and even in the wheat-growing areas of Emilia they could seldom afford to eat white bread.

The most wretched part of Italy was of course the south.[2] The economy of the interior was dominated by the *latifondi*: great estates devoted mainly to cereals and pasture, owned often by absentee landlords, managed by profit-making middlemen and worked in small units by peasant tenants on annual leases. Great tracts of country were without roads or houses or water; many of the plains were swampy and malaria-ridden. The peasants lived far from their work, clustered in great villages which might have many thousands of inhabitants but lacked all the amenities of a town. Legal feudalism had been abolished, but the peasant was still frequently in a position of moral servitude and personal dependence on his landlord, owing him services in labour or payments in kind. The economy of the *latifondo* was insulated from the outside world and almost self-sufficient; tools, clothes and building materials would be produced on the estate and little of its produce would reach the market. The pressure of population was such that labourers were forced to accept desperation wages, and small tenants to agree to terms of lease so onerous that they lived permanently in debt and totally without security.

The political and social consequences were disastrous. Bitter class hatred lay close below the surface of the southern countryside. A sharp cleavage divided the privileged from the disinherited; on the one side were the landowners and the *signori*, with their agents and dependents, the lawyers and merchants, the bureaucrats and petty intellectuals of the towns; on the other side the peasantry. Even where they lived side by side in the same village, there were few contacts between them. A middle class of the type common to all north-western Europe did not exist outside the handful of large towns. The disappearance of the Bourbons did nothing to alter this. The makers of united Italy shrank from upsetting the social structure

[1] Pellagra is a disease of malnutrition, found mainly in maize-eating areas. In its late stages it causes insanity and finally death.

[2] Unless otherwise stated, the term 'the south' will in future be used to describe the mainland provinces of the former Neapolitan kingdom, together with Sicily and Sardinia.

of the countryside and saw in the landowning class the one element of stability on which they could rely against counter-revolution and social upheaval. If some had reservations about the reliability of these eleventh-hour patriots, so recently the pillars of Bourbon rule, their doubts were resolved by their conviction that the opening up of the south to trade, and the introduction of modern institutions and honest government, would transform the old society and destroy the relics of feudalism and poverty. But the introduction of liberal institutions, framed on the assumption of the existence of a numerous middle class as in the north, in fact had the opposite effect when superimposed on social conditions belonging to another stage of civilisation. Liberty in the south after 1860 meant only too often the liberty of the powerful to rob the weak. The propertied classes enjoyed absolute economic power; in addition, local government, justice and the administration of charity were in their hands. They decided local taxation which was frequently of an unashamedly class character. Only they possessed the vote. The deputy was their creature, and to secure his support in parliament, governments were prepared to turn a blind eye to the grievances of the peasantry, putting their electoral interest before their duty to the nation as a whole. The prefect was reduced to the status of 'a diplomatic agent' accredited by a 'foreign' government to the local potentates.[1] The national revolution of 1860 did not bring freedom and prosperity to the southern peasant; though 'declared a citizen by the law, he remained an oppressed serf'.[2]

With the exception of Sicily, where a large-scale peasant revolt preceded Garibaldi's landing, there were few places where the peasantry played a positive part in the unification of Italy. The countryside in general had remained passive; if it stirred itself, it had usually been on the side of the old order. Governments in peasant eyes are unnecessary evils. The new Italian government was specially odious because it had been imposed by the *signori* and the towns, because it persecuted the church, increased the taxes and enforced conscription; but above all because it was efficient.[3] Though Garibaldi had played with the idea of land reform on his first arrival at Naples, neither moderates nor democrats subsequently made much effort to win support among the peasantry. Indeed it was Garibaldi's

[1] Franchetti, *Mezzogiorno e colonie*, pp. 23–5, 44–6, 204.

[2] Franchetti and Sonnino, *La Sicilia*, II, p. 133. Franchetti and Sonnino were wealthy Tuscan conservatives who in the years 1873–5 conducted extensive private enquiries into the social and administrative conditions of the Neapolitan mainland and Sicily.

[3] Sonnino remarked in 1880 that 'the tax gatherer and the policeman are the only propagators of the religion of patriotism amongst the brutalised masses of our peasantry'. 'Victor Emmanuel is robbing us of everything', a Calabrian peasant woman told Franchetti in 1874. Franchetti, *Mezzogiorno e colonie*, p. 140.

lieutenants who put down the Sicilian peasant revolt with extreme severity when it showed signs of getting out of hand. Most of the makers of Italy shared Mazzini's view, for which there was much justification, that the countryside was 'the reservoir of anti-national reaction'. A great chance was lost when the church lands were sold. It is true that some of the legislation contained provisions to encourage the growth of small peasant properties. But the state was in too great a hurry for cash to worry overmuch about land distribution. The auctions were often rigged, especially in the south, by the large landowners; and a majority of the peasants who did buy plots for themselves were soon forced through lack of capital or skill to resell. Most of the church lands found their way into the hands of the wealthy and powerful.

Southern land hunger was intensified by large-scale misappropriation of the common lands (*demani*) controlled by the local authorities. Despite constant pressure from the peasants for their distribution to the landless, the *signori* who filled the local councils frequently divided the *demani* amongst themselves or sold them illegally and enjoyed the proceeds. The peasants were thus deprived not only of the prospect of land of their own, but also of common grazing and other ancient rights. This was one of the few grievances that 'exhausted the inexhaustible patience of the peasants' and drove them to desperate action; it was perhaps the most important single cause of class hatred in the southern countryside. Again and again in succeeding decades the peasants would try to seize and squat on these common lands which had been stolen from them by 'an act of brigandage', with the connivance of the state, and which they still regarded as rightfully theirs.[1]

Even in the north and centre of Italy a great gulf separated the social classes in the countryside, isolating the peasantry from the main stream of national life and leaving it outside the state to which it did not seem to belong. The distinction often drawn between 'real' and 'legal' Italy was no literary fantasy.[2] 'Legal' Italy was the King and parliament, the politicians and bureaucrats, concentrated in a distant capital: 'real' Italy was the mass of the peasant population. Communication between the two was rare and unfriendly. After 1860 land hunger and rural overpopulation were the two main features of the Italian countryside and were responsible for a steadily growing social tension. This did not quickly become apparent to 'legal'

[1] ibid., pp. 119, 206. 'The *questione demaniale* is the real social question of southern Italy', declared Fortunato (see below, p. 87) in 1880. *Il Mezzogiorno e lo stato italiano*, I, p. 72.

[2] The terms were first used by a conservative, Jacini, and occur again and again in the polemical literature of the time. Both the Catholic opposition and the extreme left championed 'real' against 'legal' Italy.

Italy because the peasantry was illiterate, politically inarticulate and for the most part still passively resigned to a life of poverty, toil and subjection, broken by sporadic outbursts of desperate violence.

But even in the decade 1861–70 there were two significant signs of stirring: southern brigandage and the northern revolt against the *macinato* tax. Brigandage was the southern peasant's traditional method of protest against misgovernment and inhuman social conditions. Young men would take to the mountains because they could not find work or pay their taxes, or to evade the police, or perhaps just in search of adventure. They lived in bands named after chieftains with high-sounding titles and made their living by robbery, assassination and blackmail. Some became legendary Robin Hoods who plundered the *signori* and distributed the loot to the poor. But in the years 1861–5, when over large parts of the south the authority of the central government existed in little more than name, brigandage assumed greater political and social significance. The brigand bands were swollen by demobilised N.C.O.s and soldiers of the Bourbon army and by many who had lost jobs or power with the destruction of the Neapolitan kingdom. The peasants supported them because they were their only allies against the *signori* in league with a 'foreign' government. Land hunger, protests against Piedmontisation, devotion to the church and Neapolitan separatism all helped to provoke a confused and savage insurrection. Many country priests and secret committees in the towns gave the brigands active support. From Rome, the seat of the exiled Bourbon court and headquarters of the counter-revolution, came spiritual encouragement and material aid. For four years the south was in a state of civil war and 100,000 troops and Piedmont's best generals were required to pacify it by systematic military conquest and police repression. More lives were lost in this grim war than in all the military campaigns of the Risorgimento. Though Sicily suffered less than the mainland from political brigandage, its condition was little happier. After the imposition of conscription in 1861, for the first time in the island's history, 25,000 young men took to the hills to evade the law. Troops were used on a massive scale to round them up, but with very limited success. In 1866 insurrection broke out in Palermo. It was led by many of the same men who had organised the popular rising against the Bourbons six years before, and it had the support of the church, Bourbon loyalists, Mazzinian republicans and regional separatists. For seven days the city was in the hands of the rebels. Casualties were higher than in 1860. Martial law and stern repression followed. By 1870 the south was exhausted and the government had regained control. The collapse of the temporal power and the flight of the Bourbons from Italian soil ended the possibility of organised counter-revolution. Brigandage has survived into our times in parts of Sicily (and Sardinia), but with-

out political significance.[1] Elsewhere it has not outlived the coming of roads and railways and the provision of a more effective safety valve for the countryside in the shape of emigration.[2]

The riots of 1869–70 against the *macinato* tax were the northern counterpart to southern brigandage. Desperate peasants all over Emilia attacked the mills, sacked local government offices and burnt the tax registers, and set on the police with cries of 'Down with the rich' and 'Long live the Pope'. What most worried the authorities was that the disturbances were not just another of the spontaneous, unplanned explosions with which they were familiar; this time the peasants were showing the first elements of organisation and discipline. But the movement ended, like southern brigandage, in repression and exhaustion, after causing 250 deaths. The towns of Emilia were strongholds of political extremism, and in a few isolated cases young republican leaders saw in the rioting peasants useful allies against the monarchist state. But most of them, like Mazzini, scorned a movement in which the handiwork of the church seemed so evident. The towns held aloof and unaided the peasants could achieve nothing.[3]

In 1860 there was still no industrial proletariat in Italy. But in some of the northern cities, notably Turin, Genoa and Milan, the skilled artisans and craftsmen had begun to organise, and in Piedmont there was already a network of mutual benefit and friendly societies, under the paternalist direction of philanthropic moderates like Sella. These men hoped to redeem the lower classes from poverty and ignorance by teaching them thrift, self-reliance and respect for property, and by discouraging strikes and political agitation. After 1860, under the leadership of a young Venetian economist and social reformer, Luigi Luzzatti, the movement spread throughout northern Italy.[4] But as these working-class societies multiplied, they grew more political and militant, to the dismay of their former conservative patrons. Outside Piedmont, which remained a stronghold of the moderates, a substantial minority fell under Mazzini's influence and

[1] Except in the years 1943–8, when banditry thrived after another collapse of the central authority and for a time had connexions with Sicilian separatist movements.

[2] Yet the heroic days of brigand resistance are still remembered in legend. Carlo Levi, in *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, tells how in 1935, in the remote interior of Basilicata, when peasants talked to him of 'the war', they were referring not to Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia, then in progress, nor to the 1915–18 war, but to the brigands' war of 1860–5.

[3] Rosselli, pp. 230–48.

[4] In 1862 there were approximately 400, with 100,000 members; sixteen years later there were over 2,000, with 330,000 members. Luzzatti's special interest was People's Banks for the provision of cheap credit on a local, cooperative basis. He founded the first at Lodi in 1864 and by 1876 there were 112. In Luzzatti's own words (*Memorie*, I, p. 148), 'The care of the people was regarded as a mystic vocation, an essential way of loving and serving one's country.'

adopted a republican programme. In 1864 a congress was held in Naples at which representatives of 57 societies signed a Mazzinian Pact of Fraternity. But in his social doctrine Mazzini, the revolutionary republican, was little less conservative than the moderates. He believed that the future revolution would have to be made in the interests of the proletariat, just as past revolutions had been made in the interests of the middle classes; the proletariat would be liberated from the tyranny of capital by the creation of cooperatives, a wide distribution of property and the substitution of free association for unrestricted competition. But all depended on the prior establishment of a republic, the only form of government which could achieve social justice. This political rigidity cost Mazzini much support, as did his deistic, moralistic preaching and his austere prescription of education, hard work, thrift, sacrifice and virtue. 'Bread, not words', was the refrain of the working-class critics who attacked him with growing bitterness towards the end of the decade. He and his lieutenants failed to grapple with concrete questions such as wages, hours of work and unemployment; and their insistence on class collaboration and private property left them vulnerable to outbidding on their left by the socialists and anarchists of the First International.

Early in 1864 the notorious Russian revolutionary, Bakunin, paid his first visit to Italy, the country which was to occupy much of his time and energy during the last years of his life. Bakunin was a true internationalist and at once felt at home in Italian democratic and revolutionary circles. His romantic and childlike personality, his fantastic energy and his love of the most theatrical forms of conspiracy made an immediate impression. He was soon working hard, with Marx's approval, to undermine Mazzini's influence and win over the revolutionary wing of the Italian democratic movement to the cause of social revolution. Progress was slow. Six years after Marx founded the First International in London in September 1864, its strength in Italy was still limited to half a dozen secret sections, all in the south; the largest, in Naples, had 3,700 due-paying members. Its organisation was rudimentary and the police had no difficulty in disrupting it in February 1870.[1] In that year Italian socialism was still in the embryo stage, chaotic and 'populist',[2] and socialists were still hard to distinguish from republicans or democrats or militant anti-clericals. To the disgust of Bakunin, several of his most trusted collaborators dashed off in 1866 to volunteer in the patriotic war against Austria, and again next year to join Garibaldi at

[1] Hostetter, pp. 130–6.

[2] Populism is usually regarded as a Russian or east European phenomenon, but the word may fairly be applied to Italian socialism. Italy, with its primitive economy and predominantly peasant society, was something between a 'western' and an 'eastern' country in 1870.

Mentana. Only when nationalist fervour had been assuaged by the acquisition of Rome did the ideal of social revolution begin to make headway in Italy.

Mazzini, though worried by the threat from his left, pursued his old programme unchanged. In 1866 he founded a new revolutionary and conspiratorial organisation, the Universal Republican Alliance. It made many recruits in Emilia, in some of the larger cities of northern and central Italy, and in Sicily where it thrived on resentment against Piedmontisation. In March 1870 a mutiny occurred in the Pavia garrison; the execution of its ringleader, a young republican corporal named Pietro Barsanti, provided the movement with a martyr. Barsanti Associations sprang up all over Emilia and were responsible for several disturbances over the next five years, usually in the form of protests against the cost of living. But police spies kept the government well informed and republican conspiracies were never a serious threat to public order. When Mazzini landed at Palermo in August 1870, to rouse Sicily against the government and prevent Italy being dragged into war on the side of France, he was at once arrested and the island hardly stirred. This fiasco marked the end of Mazzini's political career. The occupation of Rome next month by the hated monarchist government of the Right dealt what proved to be a mortal blow to the revolutionary republican cause.

Italy in Europe

In 1871 Italy, with 26·8 million inhabitants, came sixth in order of population among the nations of Europe.[1] But its economic and military weakness, revealed to the outside world by the struggle against bankruptcy and the defeats of 1866, reduced its diplomatic weight far below what the population figures suggested. At least for the remainder of the century Italy was nearer a second-class than a first-class power. This fact alone, which so many Italians were loath to recognise, accounts for much of the frustration which apparent failures in foreign policy caused in later years. Liberal Italy had been born into an illiberal world, where Mazzinian dreams of national missions in the service of humanity counted for little beside modern armies and industrial power. The creation of Italy was distasteful to most of Europe, but especially to its land neighbours, Austria-Hungary and France. Both had for centuries regarded the Italian peninsula as a free field for diplomatic and military manœuvre, in which the feelings of the native population could be safely ignored. Now Italy's 'international servitude'

[1] The populations of the Great Powers in 1871 were as follows: Russia 78 millions, Germany 41, France 36, Austria–Hungary 35, United Kingdom 32.

was over and room had to be found for an unwelcome intruder in the councils of Europe. France also feared a rival for power and influence in the Mediterranean. Catholic Europe hated the impious usurper, and this hostility was only in part balanced by the sympathy of British liberals. In general Europe noted the new kingdom's weakness with satisfaction and hoped that its financial difficulties and its quarrel with the church would continue to keep it in a subordinate position.

Italy's foreign policy can be explained largely in terms of strategic necessity. The Alpine boundary with France gave military security. But when the northern and north-eastern frontiers were drawn after the war of 1866, Austria-Hungary, thanks to Bismarck's support, retained possession of the Trentino bulge and the mountains on the west bank of the Isonzo, which together dominated the Lombard and Venetian plains. Italy was therefore at a serious military disadvantage. Inability to defend both land frontiers simultaneously made it imperative to avoid quarrelling with more than one neighbour at the same time. To this insecurity on land was added naval inferiority in the Adriatic. Italy's east coast contained only four unsatisfactory ports – Venice, Ancona, Bari and Brindisi: facing it were the Dalmatian coast and islands, amongst which all the navies of the world could safely shelter, while at the northern end of the Adriatic the Austrians had, beside the commercial ports of Trieste and Fiume, a fine naval base at Pola. This position of inferiority made Italy hyper-sensitive to Austrian designs for expansion into the Balkans, particularly towards Albania. For Albania was to Italy what the Low Countries were to Britain; if the Austrians ever established themselves only forty-five miles across the Straits of Otranto from the Apulian heel, Italy would face encirclement and the Adriatic would become an Austrian lake.

This strategic aspect of Italo-Austrian relations was closely connected with irredentism, which was born from the Italian failure to win Trieste and the Trentino in 1866. These two 'unredeemed' lands played in Italian foreign policy a role similar to that played by Alsace-Lorraine in France. The number of active irredentists, as of active French *revanchards*, might at times be small. But the two questions lay close beneath the surface of international relations. Dissatisfaction that Italian unity was incomplete was common to all parties and classes, especially in the north which had known the *tedeschi* and Austrian rule at first hand. Salandra, the conservative Prime Minister who took Italy into the Great War, wrote many years later that there was a 'a germ of irredentism in every Italian heart'. Though conservative governments might repress the irredentist movement, none could openly repudiate its aims. Italy had been built on the principle of nationality and lasting friendship was difficult with the multi-national, anti-national Habsburg Monarchy. Andrássy, the Austro-Hungarian Foreign

Minister, lucidly summed up the position in 1874 in a despatch to his ambassador in Rome:

> The very day on which we were to consent to a modification (of the Austro-Italian frontier) on the basis of an ethnographic delimitation, similar claims could be raised by others and it would be almost impossible to refuse them. We could not in fact cede to Italy the populations which resemble her in language without artificially provoking a centrifugal movement among the nationalities placed on the frontiers of the Empire towards the sister nationalities bordering on our realms. This movement would face us with the alternative of resigning ourselves to the loss of these provinces or, always following the system of nationalities, incorporating the countries on our borders within the Monarchy.[1]

There was the further reason for intransigence that Trieste was a vital trade outlet, without which Austria-Hungary could hardly survive. In 1869 the Austrians had been prepared, during the abortive negotiations for a Franco-Austro-Italian alliance against Prussia, to discuss the cession of the Trentino in return for compensations in Germany. But the creation of the German Empire in 1871 destroyed such a possibility for ever. Not until the crisis of 1915, and then only under heavy German pressure, did an Austrian government again consent to discuss territorial concessions to Italy.

Outside the Adriatic a long vulnerable coastline made friendship with Britain, the leading sea power of the Mediterranean, a vital necessity. Moreover without British goodwill Italian influence in the Mediterranean could never grow in the face of French hostility. Italian eyes turned naturally to north Africa as a field for future activity. Only seventy miles separated Sicily from Cape Bon, and already by 1871 there were 6,000 Italian residents in Tunisia, who far outnumbered the French. Both Cavour and Mazzini believed that Italy must one day go to Tunis, if only to keep France out. Cavour also looked further afield, both to the Red Sea, where he established friendly relations with the rulers of Ethiopia, and to the eastern Mediterranean, where he was determined that Italy should have a say in the Eastern question. In 1855 he had declared, as one motive for the intervention of Piedmont in the Crimean War, that Russian control of the Straits and Russian domination of the Mediterranean would be fatal to the interests of Piedmont and Italy. Six years later his successors insisted that Italy should not be excluded from the European Concert's intervention in the Lebanon. For all these tentative aspirations British friendship was vital; and indeed friendship with Britain, however exasperating and aloof that country's governments might appear, was a dogma which remained unchallenged by any Italian foreign minister before Mussolini. Britain also

[1] Sandonà, I, pp. 104–13.

had strong motives for keeping Italian friendship. Italy almost cut the Mediterranean imperial highway in two; and though the Italian fleet by itself might be of secondary importance, the British position would have been uncomfortable if both that fleet and its bases at La Spezia and Taranto had been at the disposal of a hostile alliance.

The inescapable dilemma which confronted Italian foreign ministers was whether, in a divided Europe, their country needed allies or could safely remain neutral. Italy lay in an uncomfortable strategic position between east and west, controlling in the Po valley one of the great military highways of Europe and jutting far out into the great maritime highway of the Mediterranean. There was good cause to fear involvement in disputes between more powerful neighbours, who might try to force Italy into their own combination or at least keep it out of that of their rivals. Alliance with one side could increase that danger. On the other hand neutrality, unless armed to the teeth, might merely mean incurring the dislike of both sides and suffering the revenge of the victor.[1] The debate between alliance and neutrality runs through modern Italian history and has not ended today. The aim of the ablest Italian statesmen has been to reduce the causes of tension, to mediate and to maintain a middle diplomatic position of equilibrium. But in periods when Europe has been divided into two blocs so equally balanced that Italy's weight seemed sufficient to tip the scale, the temptation to turn to the highest bidder has sometimes proved irresistible. Italy, in inheriting Piedmont's strategical position, also inherited the Piedmontese tradition of oscillating between rival great powers in order to avoid vassalage to any single one of them.[2] Such a policy can without difficulty be represented as cynical, unheroic machiavellianism; but it is highly questionable if any other foreign policy between 1871 and 1915 could have served Italy's basic interests so well.

By 1870 two broad views of Italy's foreign relations had emerged. These were but the application to international questions of the ideals and habits of mind of the Risorgimento. Thus the Right, with its diplomatic experience, its caution and realism, had a saner understanding of Italy's true weight in Europe and of what could and could not be done. Its leaders saw that irredentist demonstrations and press abuse of Austria-Hungary were luxuries which a weak Italy could not afford. Cavour had said that Trieste and the Trentino would have to wait for a generation. His successors believed that if they were ever to be won, it would be by negotiation backed

[1] In the parliamentary debate of February 1855 on the Crimean alliance, Cavour quoted Machiavelli's opinion that in war the neutral state is bound to be 'sempre la preda di chi vince, con piacere e satisfazione di colui che è stato vinto'. Cilibrizzi, I, p. 166.

[2] Morandi, pp. 74–6.

by military strength. As early as 1844 Cesare Balbo, in his book *Delle speranze d'Italia*, had expressed the idea that Italian independence would come through Austria's 'easternisation'; eastward expansion would shift the Empire's centre of gravity into the Balkans and reconcile its rulers to losing the hegemony of the Italian peninsula. This idea persisted long after unification. With an easternised Austria-Hungary, stripped of its Italian provinces, the leaders of the Right would have had no quarrel. On the contrary, they believed that the survival of Austria-Hungary was essential if the equilibrium of Europe was to be preserved, Russia kept out of the Balkans and the Slav tide held back from Italy's frontiers.

For Mazzini's followers the principle of nationality was sacred and irredentism an article of faith. Solidarity with oppressed peoples, whether Poles or Greeks, Bulgars, Egyptians or Boers, remained for many decades an essential part of the Italian democratic ideal. Both Tsarist Russia and Turkey were detested as oppressors; but most odious of all was Austria. At the first rumour of an Austrian advance into eastern Europe, the democrats would organise support for the Balkan peoples and pass stirring irredentist resolutions. Mazzini had preached a holy war of the oppressed nations, with *Delenda Austria* as its slogan; he saw Italy as the natural leader of this crusade and the Austrian Slavs as natural allies. Before 1870 Prussia was the nation which the Left most admired, while imperial France was the object of dark suspicion. Bismarck's struggle to unite Germany commanded the sympathy of all who believed in the national principle and it was understandable that many looked to Protestant Prussia as Italy's natural ally against the Pope. It was not until much later that Italian democrats became disillusioned with Prussian militarism and Bismarck's 'blood and iron'. Napoleon III, on the other hand, seemed to Mazzini's disciples a truly satanic figure. He was the 'man of December 1851' who had destroyed the Second French Republic, the protector of the Pope and the patron of the Right which had frustrated the democratic revolution. In 1859 he had preserved Austrian rule in Venice; in 1860 he had stolen Nice and Savoy; in 1864 he had forced a servile Italian government to renounce Rome and thereby 'made Victor Emmanuel his prefect'; and in 1867, by sending troops to fire on Garibaldi at Mentana, he had finally cancelled Italy's debt to France for the alliance of 1859. More than dislike of a tyrant lay behind this antagonism to France; it was also inspired by resentment of French patronage and national jealousy of a more powerful rival, and it survived long after the disappearance of Napoleon III.

The leaders of the Right, by contrast, acknowledged Italy's debt to Napoleon III. They felt themselves to be 'sons of Magenta and Solferino', and the very thought of fighting France was abhorrent to them, even for the sake of recovering Nice and Savoy, which were 'the price freely paid for

blood shed for us'.[1] They could also understand the feelings of Catholic Europe and were prepared to make an effort to soothe them. They believed that if they showed patience and self-restraint, time would work in Italy's favour. The men of the Left disagreed. They were haunted by the fear that Italy might arrive too late and clamoured for it to be accepted immediately into the European community, not as a Cinderella among the nations, but as an equal.[2] In helping Italy to fulfil its regenerating mission and to contribute to the building of a better world, they hoped to find as much excitement and adventure, as many outlets for idealistic self-sacrifice, as they had found in the Risorgimento. When these naive but generous hopes were disappointed, many allowed their idealism to turn sour; visions of Italian greatness degenerated into rhetorical nationalism and Italy's 'civilising mission' into pseudo-Roman imperialism.

The man who did most, after Cavour, to mould Italy's foreign policy was Emilio Visconti Venosta. He was a member of a Lombard noble family who in his youth had been a disciple of Mazzini, but by 1859 had become one of Cavour's staunchest supporters in Lombardy. In 1863 he was made Foreign Minister at the age of thirty-four and he held that office five times over the next forty years.[3] In 1906 he led the Italian delegation to the Algeciras Conference and he died only in 1914. His active life therefore coincides almost exactly with that of liberal Italy. He was a true disciple of Cavour. Though he lacked Cavour's unscrupulous audacity, parliamentary brilliance and ability to dominate events, he possessed to the full those qualities of realism, adaptability, patience and common sense which were characteristic of the best representatives of the Right. Like Cavour, he hated revolution and distrusted the masses; but he was a conservative, not a reactionary, with a profound belief in liberty and in the parliamentary régime as liberty's surest bulwark.[4] In 1863 he decided that Italy should remain uncommitted and summed up his policy in the phrase 'Always independent, never isolated'. His aim was to be on good terms with all his neighbours, above all with France. The September Convention was his work. The temporary alliance with Prussia in 1866, concluded while he was out of office, did not conflict with his long-term aim, for it brought Italy closer to Prussia without alienating France; and very soon after the war was over, Italo-Austrian relations were friendlier than ever before.

The first major test of Visconti Venosta's policy came with the Franco-Prussian war. For two years before it broke out, Napoleon III had been

[1] Chabod, *Storia*, p. 113. Magenta and Solferino were the French victories which led to the expulsion of the Austrians from Lombardy in 1859.

[2] ibid., p. 286.

[3] In 1863–4, 1866–7, 1869–76, 1896–8 and 1899–1901.

[4] Chabod, *Storia*, pp. 563–7, 585–7.

pressing for a Franco-Austro-Italian alliance against the growing Prussian menace. The negotiations failed because France refused to abandon Rome. 'Better the Prussians in Paris than the Italians in Rome', the Empress Eugénie was alleged to have declared. When war broke out on 19 July 1870, Italian public opinion was divided. In Visconti Venosta's words, 'the government was French and the country was Prussian'.[1] The Left was enthusiastic for Prussia, and Mazzini was eager, with Bismarck's encouragement, to launch a revolution, should Lanza's government go to Napoleon III's aid. Many would gladly have acted on Bismarck's pressing invitation to seize Nice. But the proclamation of a republic in Paris and the shattering Prussian victories turned France into an oppressed democratic nation and, once again, the champion of the ideals of 1789. Garibaldi rushed to defend it with a handful of faithful volunteers and won a minor victory over the invader at Dijon. The Right also was divided. Several prominent ministers shared the belief of Victor Emmanuel and his generals that Italy had a debt of honour to France to fulfil; they also feared the fate of a neutral Italy in a Europe dominated by Prussia. Another section of the cabinet, led by Sella, held out stubbornly for neutrality. Fortunately for Italy the war went so fast that intervention was soon impossible.

Meanwhile there was Rome to tackle. Visconti Venosta clung to Cavour's belief that Italy must go to Rome by *mezzi morali* only, and resisted the employment of force until the last moment. As late as 16 August he reaffirmed Italy's loyalty to the September Convention, hoping for a peaceful solution in the form of an international guarantee of the Pope's independence in an Italian Rome. But Pius IX refused to negotiate. At the end of August the last French troops evacuated Rome, leaving the gunboat *Orénoque* at Civitavecchia to take the Pope on board in case of need. On 2 September Napoleon III surrendered to the Prussians at Sedan and two days later the Third Republic was proclaimed. Continued loyalty to the September Convention now became impossible. Inside the cabinet Sella was pressing for immediate occupation. Even Visconti Venosta became convinced that if the government did not seize Rome in an orderly fashion, volunteers of the left would soon seize it in revolutionary disorder; Rome could not be left to its own devices, for 'it would inevitably have become the Roman Republic'.[2] Once again, as in 1860–1, the Italians sought and obtained European approval for 'a conservative action', in defence of order and the monarchical principle. Victor Emmanuel, on whose solemn protestations of devotion to the church Pius IX still counted,[3] was reluctantly stirred into action by fear of revolution. Two days after the proclamation of the French Republic the government made its decision. On

[1] ibid., p. 121. [2] ibid., pp. 330–2. [3] Pirri, XXIV, pp. 292, 303.

12 September the Italian army crossed the papal frontier and on the 20th entered Rome.

The foundation of the German Empire meant the end of the old Europe. Visconti Venosta spoke for many of the Right when he lamented its passing. The future seemed uncertain and comfortless. The spirit of force and conquest was abroad. Rome had been won, but Napoleon III, on whom the Right had leant so heavily, had vanished. Catholics throughout the world felt outraged; and in France not only Catholics but liberals and republicans were embittered by Italian ingratitude. Europe's equilibrium had been shattered and the continent seemed to be at the mercy of the two giants, Germany and Russia. The Slav menace loomed larger; the power of the new Germany might soon be felt at Trent and Trieste.[1] The Paris Commune had unleashed the forces of revolution and anarchy. The values and institutions on which the Right set so great store – moderation, tolerance, liberty and order, parliamentary monarchy, a balance of power in Europe – were now at a discount.

But many Italians, especially on the left, rejoiced at the upheaval, and saw fascinating prospects for their country in a new world dominated no longer by tradition but by science and power. The future lay with the young, vigorous, virile nations, Germany and Italy, whose aspirations ran parallel and whose interests coincided. Italy could now assert itself, achieve real independence, and show that the Risorgimento had been as great a revolution as that of 1789. The forces of Italian nationalism and liberalism, barely distinguishable since 1815, now began to diverge. It was not only on the left that there was talk of wiping out the humiliation of 1866 and cementing national unity by a victorious war. Victor Emmanuel fully shared such hopes. The possession of Rome generated dreams of an imperial mission in Africa, of making the Mediterranean *mare nostrum*, of showing that the Roman warrior mentality was not dead. Even Mazzini, in his later writings, admitted colonial expansion as a legitimate part of Italy's national mission. Some of his former followers, notably Crispi, went much further, till energy and action, power and prestige became ends in themselves.

Italian sympathies continued to be divided after 1870 between France and Germany, both of which had their passionate admirers. Those who were impatient to see Italy great, looked to Germany; those who thought Italy needed time and calm, worked for friendship with France. But there was no clean division between Right and Left on problems of foreign policy. As France evolved from clericalism and monarchism to republicanism, and Germany from the militant anti-clericalism of the *Kulturkampf*

[1] Chabod, *Storia*, pp. 113 ff., 140 ff., 465 ff.

to solidarity with reactionary Austria-Hungary and Russia, many Italians transferred their affections. Both Right and Left contained Francophils and Francophobes, Germanophils and Germanophobes. The real difference between them was rather one of style and temperament than long-term aim. The men of the Left, whether they believed in democracy or national greatness, in the principle of nationality or an imperial mission, were in a hurry to see results and to put Italy on the map. The Right was cautious; liberty must be tempered by order, the principle of nationality by the maintenance of equilibrium in Europe; Italy was young and immature, and must move forward step by step. Thus the clash of method and temperament, which had divided Cavour and Garibaldi, persisted long after unification had been achieved.[1]

[1] ibid., pp. 545–62.

PART I

CONSOLIDATION

1870–87

1

Right and Left

The Parliamentary Revolution

On 20 September 1870 Italian Bersaglieri troops under General Raffaele Cadorna breached the walls of Rome near the Porta Pia and against resistance that, by express order of Pius IX, was purely token, entered the city. On 2 October the population voted by an overwhelming majority in a plebiscite for union with Italy, and on 27 November 1871 the Italian parliament met for the first time in Rome. In his speech from the throne Victor Emmanuel spoke of the political *risorgimento* that was ended and of the economic *risorgimento* that would follow close behind. In declaring that prose had succeeded to poetry, he echoed the feelings of all Italians that the year 1870 had been a turning-point. The problem which for ten years had obsessed them was now solved. A deadweight had been lifted from Italian foreign policy, and at home energies could be turned into new and more constructive channels.

But the years after 1870 seemed to many who lived through them a period of disillusionment and anticlimax.[1] The Italians are not a prosaic people. Nostalgia for the poetry of the Risorgimento, for the battles and conspiracies and heroism, tortured the Garibaldini. Mazzini reviled the new Italy as 'a great lie', created by dynastic egoism and humiliating diplomatic compromises. No golden age followed unification, but instead an arduous national struggle for existence and countless private struggles for bread and butter and jobs. Big issues were replaced by small issues, great men by little men. Giosuè Carducci, Italy's greatest lyrical poet of modern times, expressed in an extreme form this bitterness and nostalgia, these merciless criticisms of his own generation, which did so much to create the atmosphere of those early years. 'Oh for the days of sun, of liberty and glory in 1860!' he declaimed in 1886; 'oh for the struggles of titans between Cavour and Garibaldi in 1861! What have we become!'

[1] See Croce, pp. 1–4, a fine passage very characteristic of the author.

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The occupation of Rome, by removing the main point of difference between the parliamentary parties, ushered in a period of political uncertainty. It became increasingly difficult as time passed to say what Right and Left stood for. The Left, it was true, was more fiercely anti-clerical than the Right, believed more staunchly in *laisser faire* principles, and was in a greater hurry for greater reforms. But what chiefly separated them, apart from personal antagonisms and memories of the past, was the fact that for the first ten years of Italy's existence the Right had provided the governments and the Left the opposition: that the one was 'in' and the other 'out'. The leaders of the Right looked upon themselves as the true makers of Italy and the trustees of its future. They had no illusions about the political immaturity of the people and were convinced that many years of strong honest government would be necessary before political liberties could be widened or the suffrage extended. This attitude of moral superiority embittered members of the Left. It seemed to them that Garibaldi's contribution to unification had been systematically underrated. Veterans of the Thousand writhed under the barely concealed contempt with which Piedmontese generals greeted their incorporation in the regular army.[1] The new jobs in diplomacy, in the judiciary and the administration had with few exceptions been given to supporters of the Right. A further cause of bitterness arose from the Right's treatment of the south. Ruthless repression of brigandage and prolonged martial law gave the Left its chance to brand the government as the oppressor of the people. Garibaldi, whose achievements had already passed into legend, now became the poor man's king, whose portrait hung beside the Madonna's over peasant fireplaces. He was the symbol round which the conflicting discontents of the south focussed. And so, ironically, the crusader who had dealt the Bourbon kingdom its deathblow became in the space of a few years the patron of a political opposition in which barely concealed Bourbon sympathisers found their place; a situation which provided plenty of opportunities for self-righteous sarcasm by the Right. By 1870 the Left had become the champion of all the injured classes and depressed areas which were demanding political recognition. In its manifestos it continued to speak in the name of the people and the disinherited. But by now many of its leaders had moved far from Mazzini's intransigence or Garibaldi's mania for opposition. They were impatient and greedy for power, and prepared to combine with discontented sections of the Right in order to obtain it.

The Right was exhausted and in visible decline. The rift between the

[1] Only 1,584 out of Garibaldi's 7,000 officers were given commissions in the army after 1860; the remainder were dismissed with a small pension. Cilibrizzi, I, pp. 371–2.

Piedmontese Permanente and the anti-Piedmontese Consorteria had not been healed, and regional antagonisms persisted. There were also personal divisions within its ranks. Of its three leading figures, Giovanni Lanza, Marco Minghetti and Quintino Sella, the latter two never consented to serve in the same government. Lanza, who became Prime Minister in 1869, was a Piedmontese of modest origins and simple tastes: son of a blacksmith, graduate in medicine and self-made man, he showed to a conspicuous degree the stubborn integrity and devotion to the public service which marked so many of the leaders of the Right. Sella, his Minister of Finance, also Piedmontese, was a member of the family which had created the woollen industry of his native Biella. A geologist, mathematician and mining engineer by training, he believed in science and technical progress, and was deeply interested in social problems. Like Lanza, he was austere and simple in his private life; with his rough country clothes and mountaineer's boots he seemed 'even in his appearance to personify Italy's necessity for economy'.[1] Above all he was an outstanding administrator. Minghetti by contrast was a polished, cultured Romagnole from Bologna, with little of the austerity and stiffness of the Piedmontese, a wide knowledge of Europe and a gift for oratory which had earned him the name of 'the siren'. In politics he showed more subtlety and flexibility than most of his party, and in 1870 he was the acknowledged leader of the 'dissident Right'.

These men disagreed on major questions of policy. In religious affairs Lanza and Minghetti were the heirs of Cavour's liberalism; Sella, who in 1870 had been the Right's most impatient advocate of immediate occupation of Rome, believed in stricter control of the church. In finance Sella was uncompromising in his fight to balance the budget and cared nothing for unpopularity; Minghetti was more sensitive to pressure for less rigorous taxation. The Piedmontese Sella was an unrepentant centraliser; the Romagnole Minghetti sympathised with the Left's demands for decentralisation. A small section of the Right, of which the Neapolitan Silvio Spaventa was the intellectual leader, was influenced by Hegelian ideas. Spaventa confessed himself 'an adorer of the state', which he regarded as the directing conscience of the nation, and whose all-powerful authority he believed would be not a threat to individual liberty, but its essential guarantee. Sella and Minghetti, without being 'adorers', wished to extend the functions of the state to embrace social legislation, post office savings banks and the direct management of railways, hoping by such means to control capitalist speculation, both Italian and foreign, and limit the power of 'financial feudalism'. Such ideas were abhorrent to *laisser faire*

[1] Underwood, pp. 9–10.

liberals, and especially to the Tuscan Right under Ricasoli's successor, Ubaldino Peruzzi.[1]

These internal differences of the Right made the position of Lanza's government precarious after 1870. Minghetti's group combined on many occasions with the most moderate section of the Left under Depretis, and in June 1873 Lanza fell on a question of finance. Attempts to form a coalition broke down and Minghetti formed a new ministry of the Right, no more secure than Lanza's. In the general election of November 1874 the Left made striking gains, especially in the south, and returned 232 strong in a chamber of 508. The Right's achievements were remarkable. A tolerable solution of the problem of church and state was reached in the Law of Guarantees of 1871.[2] In foreign policy Visconti Venosta successfully pursued his aims of conciliation and independence.[3] Public order was maintained throughout the country, though often by strong-handed methods.[4] Sella and Minghetti continued to practise 'economy to the bone', and in March 1876 the latter was able to announce that the state was at last solvent.[5] But these successes did not prevent the Left from exploiting the rising discontent over taxation, restrictions on freedom and a 'weak' foreign policy. The Right was pilloried as a closed oligarchical caste, which claimed a monopoly of patriotism and a semi-divine right to rule. Cavour's successors have been fairly described as a 'spiritual aristocracy', for whom affairs of state were a religion.[6] Their scrupulous personal honesty caused them to die poor. They wished to educate Italy to their own high ideals of government and were deaf to what seemed sordid demands for favours from those whom their policies injured. This failure to unbend was their downfall.[7]

The Right finally fell from power in the 'parliamentary revolution' of 18 March 1876. Minghetti's announcement of a budget surplus two days before had helped to precipitate his fall, by giving tax-conscious deputies the feeling that 'economy to the bone' could now be dispensed with. But two other issues helped to bring about the decisive vote in the chamber: Florence's demand for financial help and the organisation of the railways.

[1] Carocci, pp. 53–4. Luzzatti, the Right's most prominent recruit from the post-Risorgimento generation and a close collaborator of Minghetti, referred to Peruzzi and his friends as 'Smithiani arrabbiati'. *Memorie*, I, p. 507.

[2] See below, pp. 55–6. [3] ibid., pp. 98–102. [4] ibid., pp. 66 ff.

[5] ibid., p. 62.

[6] Croce, pp. 4–5.

[7] Most of the leaders of the Right recognised this fault after their defeat. Ruggero Bonghi, the party's leading intellectual and publicist, and ex-Minister of Education, wrote in 1876: 'Noi partiti moderati attendevamo a fare le cose, e l'Opposizione ha atteso a far le coselle.' R. Bonghi, *Come cadde la Destra* (2nd ed., Milan 1929), p. 222.

Florence's claim was based on the fact that its selection as the capital of Italy in 1865 had involved the municipality in a costly programme of building and embellishment. Tuscan deputies were unanimous that the city was entitled to compensation from the nation for the sudden move of the capital to Rome, but the government was unsympathetic. The railway question roused even stronger feelings. In pre-industrial Italy the railways offered the greatest opportunities for capital investment. When the Minister for Public Works, Spaventa, introduced a bill for state ownership and management of the whole railway system, powerful financial interests felt threatened and mobilised their political spokesmen, both on the Left and among the *laisser faire* Lombards and Tuscans of the Right. On 18 March Peruzzi and the Tuscan Right voted with the Left and defeated the government. Minghetti resigned and the King commissioned Agostino Depretis, the leader of the moderate Left, to form a new ministry.

At the time this change of government seemed more important than it appears in retrospect. Republicans hailed it as the first step towards a republic and prophesied that the monarchy would not survive Victor Emmanuel. The excitement on the Left was intense. At last it had won effective power, a just reward for its achievements in the Risorgimento and for the long years of waiting. The south, too, felt elated. By including a substantial number of southerners in his cabinet, Depretis fulfilled the hopes of the southern middle class which had looked to him to rescue it from the frustration it had felt under the Right.[1] In the election of November 1876 the Right was routed. Giovanni Nicotera, the new Minister of Interior, changed almost every prefect throughout the kingdom and subjected voters, local authorities and the press to greater electoral pressure than Italy had yet known. Well might Spaventa lament 'administrative terror' and the 'reduction of the State to a monstrous electoral machine'. The Left won 414 seats and the opposition 94. Of the 194 deputies representing the south, only 9 belonged to the Right.

The King chose Depretis as his Prime Minister because he was a northerner, from Stradella on the boundary between Piedmont and Lombardy, and because he belonged to the most moderate section of the Left. He had been elected to the first Piedmontese parliament in 1848 and he remained a deputy continuously until his death in 1887. At first he had sat with the democratic opposition, declining in 1852 to support Rattazzi's *connubio* with Cavour. But by 1876 his democratic fervour had cooled, his republicanism had long since vanished and he had grown into a cautious, realistic, hard-working politician. He was a good administrator, a brilliant judge of character and a sober, effective speaker; he never lost his head or took too much to heart the vicious personal attacks from which he suffered,

[1] Carocci, pp. 65–9.

and preferred to appease rather than antagonise or excite passion. On occasions he carried his preference for procrastination to lengths which, especially in foreign affairs, did his country harm. But, though there were few ready to admit it, Italy owed Depretis a great debt. He was Prime Minister for over eight of the eleven years from March 1876 to July 1887, and Minister of Interior for a further eighteen months in the same period.[1] It was in large part due to his guidance and sure judgement that Italy had time to consolidate its unity.

The new government's programme had been foreshadowed by Depretis in a famous speech at Stradella in October 1875. Its chief points were devotion to the monarchy, unrestricted constitutional liberties and electoral freedom,[2] a cautious foreign policy and a series of major reforms – extension of the suffrage, decentralisation of the administration, abolition of the *macinato* tax and free, secular, primary education.[3] It was a moderate programme, and it soon became clear that Depretis was in no hurry to put it into effect. His ministers, some of whom had stormy republican pasts, disappointed all hopes of revolutionary change. On Nicotera, the Minister of Interior, for instance, the responsibilities of office had a sensational effect. This Calabrian disciple of Mazzini now put his Jacobin tempestuousness and delight in personal vendetta at the service of the monarchy and the cause of law and order. Depretis himself set the tone of his administration by declaring that he was ready to accept the collaboration of all honest, loyal and competent men, to whatever party they belonged. This overture did not remain without response. In October 1876 Sella praised the new government and parts of its programme, and said he would not oppose merely for the sake of opposition. Minghetti associated himself with these views. Soon Lanza was claiming that Depretis's programme was that of the Right, and Spaventa, not without bitterness, was describing the government as 'a government of the Right, but not so good'.[4]

This moderation was most displeasing to a vocal section of the Left and almost at once the heterogeneous majority returned in the 1876 election began to break up. Within it ex-Mazzinians and Garibaldini sat side by side with former supporters of the Right and recently converted Bourbon sympathisers. Many of the deputies elected for the first time, who constituted one-third of the total, were men new to politics, to whom the old slogans and ideals meant little. The biggest triumph of the Left had been

[1] He was Prime Minister from March 1876 to March 1878, December 1878 to July 1879 and May 1881 to July 1887; and Minister of Interior from November 1879 to May 1881 under Cairoli.

[2] Nicotera's management of the November 1876 election was an ironic commentary on this part of the programme.

[3] Cilibrizzi, II, pp. 92–3.

[4] P. Romano, *Silvio Spaventa* (Bari 1942), p. 226.

in the south, which had been least influenced politically by Mazzini and Garibaldi. Quite rapidly two main sections of the Left became distinguishable: the moderates under Depretis, and the 'progressives' or 'pure' Left. The latter demanded immediate, sweeping reforms and regarded Depretis's gradualism as a betrayal of the Left's ideals. But the two groups overlapped and there was constant passing from one to the other and back again, often from purely personal motives.

The three leading personalities of the 'pure' Left were Francesco Crispi, Benedetto Cairoli and Giuseppe Zanardelli.[1] Crispi was a Sicilian, of mixed Italian and Albanian descent. As a young and fervent Mazzinian he had been a leading organiser of the Sicilian revolution of 1848. Long years of exile had followed in Malta, France and London. In 1860 he sailed with the Thousand as Garibaldi's political secretary and became dictator of Sicily, then secretary of state in Naples. Next year he was elected to the first Italian parliament. At first he sat on the extreme left. No one denounced the Right more scathingly for 'diplomatising the revolution'. But personal ambition and restlessness made him a difficult colleague and soon earned him the name of 'Il Solitario'.[2] In 1864 he finally deserted Mazzini, declaring that 'the monarchy unites us, the republic would divide us'. This was his first step towards power. Depretis omitted him from his first cabinet, but in December 1877 he succeeded Nicotera as Minister of Interior. He was a man of violent temper and enormous energy, whose whole life, public and private, was turbulent, dramatic and marked by a succession of bitter enmities. He abhorred compromise, was incapable of tact or conciliation, and had a craving for bigness, both for himself and for his country. His first term of office could hardly have been stormier. In February 1878 a Neapolitan newspaper, inspired by Nicotera, accused him of bigamy. A judicial investigation subsequently cleared him of the charge: but his defence was not edifying,[3] and he was meanwhile forced to resign after only three months in the government. For nine years after 1878 he remained a leader of the 'progressive' opposition.

Cairoli's political past was similar to Crispi's, but he was a man of very different character: the Bayard of democracy, the knight-errant in politics,

[1] Zanardelli became Depretis's Minister of Public Works in March 1876, but resigned in November 1877. This move led immediately to the formation of the 'pure' Left, with about eighty members.

[2] F. Petrucelli della Gattina, in *I moribondi del Palazzo Carignano* (2nd ed., Bari 1913), p. 153, describes how he once asked Crispi whether he was a Mazzinian. 'No,' he replied. 'Are you a Garibaldian, then?' 'Certainly not,' he replied. 'And what are you then?' 'I am Crispi.'

[3] In December 1854 Crispi had been married by an itinerant Jesuit priest in Malta to Rosalia Montmasson, who later accompanied him on the expedition of the Thousand to Sicily. In 1875 he left her in order to legitimise his daughter by Lina Barbagallo, with whom he went through a religious marriage ceremony. As

'in whom all was tolerated, even romantic naivety and political incompetence'.[1] Four of his brothers had lost their lives in the Risorgimento. He himself had fought the Austrians in his native Lombardy in 1848–9, then served with Garibaldi in Sicily and again in 1867 outside Rome. He remained devoted to Garibaldi as long as his hero lived and often acted as his political mouthpiece; but his democratic leanings, his sympathy with irredentism and his passionate belief in liberty proved an embarrassment when he succeeded Depretis as Prime Minister. He himself pronounced the fairest judgement on his statesmanship, during his first term of office in 1878. 'We will not be clever', he said, 'but we wish to be honest.' He fully lived up to his promise.[2] Zanardelli, another Lombard, was a distinguished jurist and an eloquent orator, who fully shared Cairoli's belief in liberty. Even the slightest restriction caused him pain, and throughout his long career he was the most ardent advocate in Italian politics of free trade and *laisser faire*, of freedom of conscience and divorce.

Further to the left again was the small but growing Extreme Left, which numbered about a dozen deputies after 1876. At first it had been intransigently republican and swore undying enmity not only to the monarchy, but to parliament and the whole political system. But successive waves of republicans overcame their scruples to the extent of swearing loyalty to King and Constitution, with mental reservations, and taking their seats as deputies. Their republicanism was slowly reduced to lip service to a noble but remote ideal, which they felt little bound to transform into reality. Typical of this evolution was the career of Agostino Bertani, who had organised Garibaldi's Sicilian expedition in 1860 and remained a militant Mazzinian long after most of his companions had accepted the monarchy. On Mazzini's death he became leader of the Republican party. But in 1878 he too compromised and founded the Radical party, which preached an advanced democratic programme within the framework of the monarchist state. Bertani died in 1886 and was succeeded as leader of the Extreme Left by Felice Cavallotti. Chivalrous, dashing and romantic, Cavallotti had joined Garibaldi in 1860 at the age of eighteen and later achieved fame as poet, dramatist, journalist and demagogue. His love affairs were discussed throughout Italy. He was an inveterate dueller and met his death in his thirty-third duel in 1898.[3] Known as 'the bard of democracy', he soon became one of the outstanding political figures of his time.

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this was not legally binding, the charge of bigamy did not arise until January 1878, when they celebrated a civil marriage. Crispi's defence was that the marriage with Rosalia Montmasson had been invalid.

[1] Bonomi, *La politica italiana da Porta Pia a Vittorio Veneto*, p. 56.

[2] M. Rosi, *I Cairoli* (Bologna 1929), I, p. 321; Cilibrizzi, II, pp. 162–3.

[3] He and a friend once challenged all the officers of a Milan cavalry regiment.

After 1876 this Extreme Left, with its radical nucleus and socialist and republican fringes, performed the same function of criticism as the Left had performed before 1876. Its patron was Garibaldi, who since 1867 had rarely left Caprera, his island retreat off the north coast of Sardinia. In 1879 he emerged from his retirement and came to Rome. There under his benevolent eye was founded the League of Democracy, with a programme that was to be the prototype of all the democratic programmes of the next forty years. It included universal suffrage, democratic reform of the constitution, decentralisation, redistribution of the tax burden and large-scale land reclamation. As was to be expected, it was fiercely anti-clerical; it was also both pacifist[1] and irredentist. Garibaldi was elected deputy for Rome in 1880 but resigned his seat soon afterwards, refusing to be a legislator 'in a country where freedom is trampled on, and where the law is applied only to guarantee the liberty of Jesuits and the enemies of Italian unity'.[2] His death in 1882 strengthened the more moderate radicals who wished to play a positive role in parliament and obtain reform by constitutional methods.

After the Left came to power there was a decline in the stability of governments. Crispi's involvement in a charge of bigamy and subsequent resignation brought down the whole government in March 1878. Depretis was succeeded by Cairoli, who formed a government of a more pronounced democratic flavour, with Zanardelli as his Minister of Interior. Cairoli drew his main support from the radical middle class of Milan and the north, and his cabinet was overwhelmingly northern in composition. Garibaldi and the progressives expected great things of him, but he soon disappointed them. Shaken by diplomatic defeat at the Congress of Berlin,[3] he fell in December 1878 after an anarchist attempt on the life of the King, for which his lax police measures were held responsible.[4] Depretis returned to power with a more conservative team and programme. For the next two and a half years abolition of the *macinato* tax was the dominant political issue.[5] Cairoli was given a second term of office in July 1879, but made no attempt to repeat the democratic experiment of the previous year. After five months, as if to emphasise his new moderation, he took Depretis as his Minister of Interior, a choice that earned him denunciation by the 'pure' Left (led this time by Crispi, Zanardelli and Nicotera) for abandoning his principles and contracting an immoral *connubio*. In the election of May 1880

[1] The military panacea of the Extreme Left was the 'armed nation', i.e. a popular militia instead of regular troops. Garibaldi wanted two million healthy volunteers instead of 200,000 soldiers rotting and 'ruining the race' in barracks.

[2] Cilibrizzi, II, p. 201. The chamber refused to accept his resignation.

[3] See below, pp. 104–6. [4] ibid., p. 77. [5] ibid., p. 64.

the Right recovered ground. The government's supporters dropped from over 400 in 1876 to 218; the Right increased its representation from 94 seats to 171 (only 33 from the south) and the 'pure' Left won 119 (95 from the south). In May 1881 Cairoli was swept away by the storm which followed the French occupation of Tunis.[1] The King sent for Sella; but the threat of the Right's return, under the 'starver of the people', reunited the squabbling Left. Depretis resumed power for six unbroken years.

The first five years of rule by the Left brought no fundamental changes. Compulsory elementary education was introduced in 1877 for all children between the ages of six and nine, but many years passed before it could be effectively enforced. Anti-clericalism was given a freer hand, but the Law of Guarantees remained intact.[2] The *macinato* tax disappeared, but taxation continued to press inequitably on the poor.[3] After experimenting with milder police restrictions on political freedom, the Left reverted to the stern methods for which they had previously attacked the Right.[4] The drastic change in foreign policy, for which the Mazzinians and Garibaldians longed, never came.[5] By 1882 the phrase 'parliamentary revolution', as a description of the change of government in 1876, sounded strangely stale.

One major reform did, however, take place: in 1882 the suffrage was extended. This had figured prominently in the Left's programme even before 1870 and a minority, including Cairoli, supported the demand of Garibaldi and the League of Democracy for universal suffrage. On this point they had strange allies in a few conservatives like Sidney Sonnino, who wished to neutralise the votes of the radical towns by those of the peasantry. But Depretis, Crispi and the majority of the Left opposed the enfranchisement of the peasantry, just because it would strengthen the forces of reaction and the political power of the church. They therefore insisted on literacy as a minimum qualification. The Right, with its fear of the masses and of revolutionaries, whether red or black, wished to retain a high property qualification; it believed that a wide suffrage would lower the quality of both voter and deputy, and wither the fragile plant of liberty, so precariously planted in Italian soil. After nearly two years of debate the suffrage bill became law in January 1882. It retained a literacy test, but reduced the minimum voting age from twenty-five to twenty-one, lowered the property qualification[6] and added as an alternative to the latter a certi-

[1] See below, pp. 108–9. [2] ibid., pp. 57–8. [3] ibid., pp. 63 ff. [4] ibid., pp. 76–7.
[5] ibid., pp. 102 ff.

[6] The following possessed the minimum property qualification: taxpayers contributing 19·8 lire a year in direct taxes; agricultural tenants paying 500 lire annually in rent; sharecroppers on farms taxed at 80 lire a year; and householders paying an annual rent of 150 lire. *Compendio*, I, pp. 71, 83. There were also a number of fancy franchises.

ficate of primary education. Its effect was to increase the electorate from 600,000 to over 2 million, from 2% to 7% of the total population. It thus set the seal on the 'parliamentary revolution' of 1876, by broadening the base from which the ruling class was drawn. One consequence, which the Right did not fail to deplore, was a lowering of political tone and a decline in administrative standards. This was the inevitable price of an extension of power from an élite to new groups more representative of an immature people; it was the price of progress towards democracy.[1]

After 1882 personal antagonisms and memories of past conflicts could still rouse deep feeling in parliament, but they could not disguise the fact that the differences between Right and Left, already small in 1876, were now rapidly vanishing. This process was aided by the disappearance of most of the great figures of the Risorgimento.[2] The Left was growing fat and satisfied in power, and had few critics to fear on its right. Successive waves of conversion from republicanism had removed the monarchy from party controversy. Anti-clericalism was becoming stale and no longer sufficient by itself as a political battle-cry. By 1882 there was agreement in most sectors of parliament and public opinion on the main lines of financial, religious and foreign policy, and on the need for prudent restrictions on freedom in the interests of public order. Individuals differed on technical questions rather than questions of principle. Right and Left were becoming conscious of what they had in common. The two in fact constituted a broad liberal party of the centre, which monopolised political and public life. Its task was the defence of the monarchy, the constitution and the unity of Italy against the subversive forces of clerical reaction and social revolution.

Depretis understood this situation. In the autumn of 1882 he dissolved the chamber and in an electoral speech at Stradella on 8 October outlined a new programme of conciliation and administrative progress. Criticising those who harped on the differences between Right and Left, and wished to 'crystallize and fossilize the parties', he declared: 'We are a progressive government, and if anyone wishes to transform himself and become progressive, if he wishes to accept my very moderate programme, can I reject him?'[3] The election was a triumph for the government. Six weeks later the King's speech from the throne called for less political dissension and better administration. Finance, public works and railway reorganisation, tariff reform and adjustment of the nation's economy to industrialisation and agricultural crisis – these were the problems that occupied parliament's

[1] C. Morandi, *La Sinistra al potere* (Florence 1944), pp. 116–19; Carocci, pp. 72–3.

[2] Victor Emmanuel II and Pius IX died in 1878, Garibaldi and Lanza in 1882, Sella in 1884, Minghetti in 1886, Depretis and Cairoli in 1887. Of front-rank personalities only Crispi survived after 1887.

[3] Cilibrizzi, II, pp. 263–4.

attention over the years 1882–7. Neither foreign nor church affairs provided excitements equal to those of the previous decade. Through the many cabinet reshuffles there was a large measure of ministerial continuity, particularly in finance and foreign policy. Depretis himself controlled the Ministry of Interior without a break from November 1879 until April 1887. His calm, anti-demagogic temperament was admirably suited to a period in which technical and administrative problems were predominant.

In appealing to his opponents to 'transform themselves' and contribute to the creation of 'a great new national party' of the centre, Depretis was returning to the parliamentary tradition of Cavour's *connubio*. To describe his manœuvre a new word – *trasformismo* – was coined from his own phrase. The intransigents of both Right and Left soon made it a term of political abuse. Nevertheless his appeal was not left unanswered. Minghetti, Luzzatti and about seventy members of the Right gave him their support, admitting that the old divisions had lost their meaning. Both moderate Right and moderate Left felt uneasy after the adventure of electoral reform; it seemed that only the solidarity of all supporters of liberal institutions could save Italy from the republican and socialist abyss.[1]

In May 1883 Zanardelli and Alfredo Baccarini resigned from the government, disgusted with Depretis's growing conservatism and his indifference to the Left's traditions and ideals. Together with Crispi, Cairoli and Nicotera they formed a Pentarchy with the purpose of intensifying the opposition which the dissident 'pure' Left had provided since 1876. In October 1884 General Cesare Ricotti, who had been the Right's Minister for War before 1876, resumed his old post in Depretis's cabinet, in order to give greater cohesion to the 'transformed' majority of moderate Left and moderate Right. Depretis's relations with the latter were not always easy, for he had no intention of becoming its prisoner. Luzzatti lamented the Prime Minister's coolness and 'the bitter pills' which the government forced the Right to swallow; nevertheless, he felt 'compelled to support it, for fear of worse'.[2] Depretis maintained his majority for five years after 1882 by playing on such fears, sometimes cajoling, sometimes bullying the fluid groups in the chamber, but always opposing radical change. In spite of advancing age and growing irresolution he remained in control, the indispensable conciliator between clashing pressure groups and a master of the art of parliamentary government.

[1] Chabod, *Storia*, pp. 384–6; Cilibrizzi, II, pp. 269–71; Carocci, pp. 262–78. Among those who remained in varying degrees intransigent and declined to follow Minghetti's lead were Bonghi, Spaventa, Visconti Venosta and the Right's future leader, Rudinì.

[2] Luzzatti to Minghetti, July 1884. Luzzatti, *Memorie*, II, p. 183.

The Church and the Law of Guarantees

Relations with the church and the Papacy overshadowed all other problems at the end of 1870. Even after 20 September Lanza's government hoped it would be possible to come to an agreement. The terms of surrender negotiated between the two commanding generals on that day excluded the Leonine City[1] from the area to be occupied by the Italian army. Though it was taken over next day in the interests of order, at the express request of the papal authorities, the government attempted to exclude it from the plebiscite on 2 October; but its population insisted on going to the polls with the rest of Rome. This was the end of attempts to prepare the way for an agreement which would have given the Papacy a less symbolic degree of temporal power than that which it finally accepted in 1929. Pius IX refused to negotiate in the face of violence and agreement was impossible without mutual confidence on both sides, which grew only with the passage of many years. In 1870 Pius insisted that the temporal power had been 'granted by divine Providence to the Apostolic See, in order that the successors of St Peter might freely and with full security exercise their spiritual powers'.[2] He neither hoped nor wished to recover the whole of his former kingdom; but restitution of 'a little corner of land', where he would be master, was an essential preliminary to negotiation.[3]

Every successive action of the government in taking over the city drew a fresh protest and fresh appeals for help from Catholics abroad. All who had been concerned with the occupation were excommunicated. Pius IX declared he would not leave the Vatican until the usurper had retired, and for over fifty-eight years no Pope set foot outside the palace precincts, choosing to remain voluntary, 'moral prisoners'. Pius IX's aim was to boycott Italy in Rome and to prevent even the most trivial act that might imply recognition.[4] He failed to persuade Catholic governments to instruct their ambassadors to remain in Florence: but the ban on visits of heads of Catholic states to Rome was effective for thirty-four years and was not

[1] The Leonine City, named after the ninth-century Pope Leo IV who had built its original walls, included St Peter's, the Vatican, the Castel Sant' Angelo and a large part of the Trastevere district, all on the west bank of the Tiber. It had a population of 15,000 in 1870.

[2] Encyclical *Respicientes ea omnis*, 1 November 1870.

[3] R. Aubert, *Le pontificat de Pie IX* (Paris 1952), p. 369.

[4] The importance attached to this withholding of recognition is shown by a petty incident described in Underwood, pp. 249–50. For a short period in 1871 Crown Prince Humbert and Princess Margherita used to attend mass in S. Maria Maggiore. When the sacristan put out red cushions for their use, he was reproved for thus acknowledging the sovereignty of the House of Savoy. It was therefore arranged that a footman should carry two cushions from the royal palace to the church every Sunday before mass.

finally lifted until 1920. Roman society split into the black nobility, which remained loyal to the Pope, and the white nobility, which acknowledged allegiance to the King of liberal Italy. For many years the two factions were not even on speaking terms. To Pius IX and to millions of Catholics all over the world, it was not only the destruction of the temporal power that seemed intolerable; there was also the desecration and violation of the Universal City. In the wake of the Italian army came the freethinkers, with visions of striking a deathblow to the very heart of Christianity; the freemasons; the worshippers of the 'golden calf' of material progress who hoped that Rome would become a centre of science instead of superstition; the Protestants, taking full advantage of the freedom guaranteed by the constitution; and, most galling of all, the anti-clerical press and theatre, the blasphemous pamphlets and periodicals which flourished on the borders of legality with the tolerance of the government. The bitterness of Catholics was summed up in the comment of the Archbishop of Paris in 1874, that Rome had become 'the vulgar capital of a modern state'.

In such circumstances the Italian government was anxious to give Pius IX as few opportunities as possible for protest and to avoid all appearance of limiting papal independence. Only by moderation, it seemed to Lanza and Visconti Venosta, could foreign intervention be averted. They gladly returned to the *mezzi morali* which they had abandoned with reluctance in September 1870. It was particularly necessary to dissuade Pius IX from leaving Rome. There was a party at the Vatican, in which the Jesuits were prominent, which was urging him to go. But the historical precedents were unpromising, and Pius was frail and old and not a man to run away from danger. All the major Powers, including Austria-Hungary, advised him to stay, while simultaneously urging restraint upon the Italian government. For a few weeks Pius nursed hopes of Prussia, the only power which had the strength, and possibly the inclination, to intervene in his defence. On 10 October he appealed personally to William I to 'aid a just cause' and 'uphold a principle which is the foundation of the social order'. But the King's reply was vague and evasive.[1] A last attempt was made in November when Cardinal Ledochowski, Archbishop of Posen, pleaded Pius IX's case before William I and Bismarck at the Prussian G.H.Q. at Versailles. The latter seems for a moment to have played with the idea of posing as the champion of the Catholic church against Italy and offering Pius IX asylum at Cologne or Fulda; but William I would not hear of it.[2] The Prussian

[1] Pirri, XXIV, pp. 320–4; XXV, pp. 238–44.

[2] Bismarck's arguments were characteristic: the Pope would have to be politically useful to Prussia in return for asylum; and the Pope's unpopularity in Rome suggested that his presence in Prussia would soon cure German Catholics of their ultramontane illusions. Halperin, pp. 85–8; Salata, *Per la storia diplomatica della questione romana*, pp. 261–8.

refusal to intervene relieved Italy of all immediate anxiety. Before 20 September Visconti Venosta had expressed readiness to accept an international guarantee of the Pope's spiritual independence. But the suggestion had met with a chilly reception from all governments except the Belgian, and the Vatican showed no enthusiasm for a scheme which would have sanctioned the destruction of the temporal power. By the end of 1870 it was clear that Italy would be left free to work out its own solution of the Roman question and of relations between church and state.

This solution took the shape of the Law of Guarantees of 13 May 1871. Its main authors, Lanza and Visconti Venosta, were both disciples of Cavour, but realised that it was impossible in 1871 to return to the 1861 formula of a 'free church in a free state'. In its final form the Law was a compromise between Cavour's liberal vision and the illiberal demands of the Left. It fell into two parts: the first dealing with the status of the Pope, the second with the relations of the church with the Italian state. The Pope was given the rank and privileges of a sovereign within Italy. Free communication with Catholics abroad, freedom of the conclave and the immunity of three papal residences[1] were guaranteed. Foreign envoys accredited to the Vatican were given full diplomatic status and special privileges were granted to the papal press. The Pope was to receive an annuity of $3\frac{1}{4}$ million lire (£130,000) from the Italian state, a sum calculated from the expenses of the papal court and Curia as published in the budget of the former Papal States. As regards the second part, Lanza and Visconti Venosta wished to abolish state jurisdiction over church affairs. Under the Law the state did in fact surrender its right to nominate bishops, and the royal *exequatur* and *placet* were no longer to be required for the execution of decisions of the church authorities. But the government was forced to make important concessions to the Left: the state's right of nomination was retained for the many episcopal sees and benefices in the patronage of the crown of Savoy and of the old monarchies whose privileges the Italian crown had taken over in 1861;[2] and abolition of the *exequatur* for the allocation of benefices was made conditional on the redistribution of ecclesiastical property and revenues. Since a redistribution law was in fact never passed, the state retained, even under the Law of Guarantees, the power to prevent new bishops from taking over the temporalities of their sees until their appointment had been approved by royal decree. Later Italian governments did not hesitate to make use of this formidable political weapon.

[1] These were the Vatican and Lateran palaces and the papal summer villa at Castel Gandolfo in the Alban Hills. The Quirinal had already been appropriated by the Italian government as the royal residence.

[2] These included all the episcopal sees in Sardinia and Sicily, over 60 of the Neapolitan sees, 4 in Emilia and the patriarchate of Venice. Binchy, pp. 377–8.

The Law was a compromise and, like all compromises, disliked by the extremists on both sides. Parliamentary orators of the Left thundered against the alleged clerical sympathies of the government. The Italian nation, they argued, was 'an advanced sentinel of progress', standing for liberty of conscience against the spiritual tyranny of the church; reconciliation was unthinkable. Mancini, a learned and eloquent Neapolitan jurist, pleaded for the retention of state controls, to protect Italy from the menace of its clerical enemies at home and abroad. Sella supported him from the benches of the Right. Pius IX on his side attacked the Law even more violently. In his encyclical of 15 May he spoke of an 'indecent mockery', 'the monstrous outcome of revolutionary jurisprudence', and referred scathingly to the 'Subalpine government' which had fabricated 'some futile privileges and immunities which are commonly called guarantees'. He made no distinction between the moderation of the Right and the militant anti-clericalism of the Left. The annuity from the Italian state was rejected and the Papacy relied instead for its essential needs on Peter's Pence, the voluntary offerings of Catholics throughout the world. In November 1871 Pius IX once again declared that 'no conciliation will ever be possible between Christ and Belial, between light and darkness, between truth and falsehood'.

Visconti Venosta and the Right regarded the Law as a temporary, unilateral solution, to be followed soon by a permanent, bilateral agreement. In this they were disappointed. But they had built more solidly than they ever imagined. The main motive behind Pius IX's intransigence was the need to prove his independence to the outside world. If he had accepted even part of the Law of Guarantees, his acceptance could have been interpreted abroad as an admission of dependence on the Italian government, and used as a pretext for obstructing the exercise of his spiritual authority over non-Italian Catholics. As time passed it became clear that the Law of Guarantees did effectively ensure the Pope's independence. Long before it disappeared in 1929, it had proved the temporal power unnecessary. This, its greatest achievement, was in the 1870s still in the future. The immediate service it rendered both church and state was to soothe the apprehensions of moderate Catholic opinion and reduce the danger of intervention which the policy of the Left would have merely aggravated.

In spite of much goodwill on the part of ministers, tension between church and state increased after 1871. This was due partly to alarm at the threats and diatribes of French clerics, partly to the concessions to anti-clerical sentiment which both the Lanza and Minghetti governments felt compelled to make. In 1872 theological faculties were suppressed in all universities, and seminaries were subjected to government inspection. Next

year the existing legislation for the suppression of religious corporations and the confiscation of their property was extended to Rome. Under pressure from the Left even the buildings occupied by the generals of forty world-wide Catholic orders were included, though the government was given, and exercised, discretionary power to exempt them from the full rigour of the law.[1] After 1873 Minghetti was less tolerant than Lanza. The Colosseum was deconsecrated, as if to symbolise the sovereignty of the secular power over Rome.[2] Religious gatherings were banned or broken up, nominally for reasons of public health; priests were conscribed; and while clerics were continually taken to task for disobeying the law, abuse of Pius IX and blasphemous attacks on the Catholic faith, though contrary to the Law of Guarantees, were conspicuously tolerated. In 1875 the Left's campaign for an Italian *Kulturkampf* grew fiercer. In answer to accusations of weakness, Minghetti promised that the Law of Guarantees would be enforced. The promise was kept, and thirty-three bishops were expelled from the temporalities of their sees because they had refused to apply for the *exequatur*.

The coming to power of the Left in 1876 raised expectations of yet greater severity. Depretis himself was a freemason. The previous year, while proclaiming his belief in freedom of worship, he had issued a warning that 'when religious sentiment turns against the political organisation of the state, then it is time to sound the alarm and see to the state's defence. The war has begun and it will be necessary to wage it *à outrance*.' The Ministry of Justice, which was responsible for church affairs, was given to Mancini, the most eloquent advocate of state control. The prospect of persecution was not displeasing to some clericals, who hoped that it would finally disillusion moderate Catholics and hasten foreign intervention. 'We prefer the clear language of Depretis to the fictions and hypocrisies of his predecessor', wrote a leading Catholic newspaper.[3] Pius IX himself compared Right and Left to cholera and earthquake, with the implication that he preferred the latter.[4]

At first it seemed that these expectations would not be disappointed. In November 1876 Mancini presented a Clerical Abuses Bill which prescribed heavy penalties for the exercise of political pressure from the pulpit or in the confessional, or by withholding the sacraments. Its approval by the chamber drew from Pius IX his bitterest protest yet, and clerical agitation in France in response to the Pope's appeal added to the tension. But the senate rejected the bill as untimely and tyrannical, arguing that the existing

[1] The general of the Jesuits was specifically excluded from the benefits of exemption.

[2] Spadolini, *L'opposizione cattolica*, p. 77.

[3] Halperin, p. 403.

[4] Spadolini, *L'opposizione cattolica*, p. 125.

penal code was sufficient to prevent abuses. The Education Act of 1877 abolished compulsory religious instruction in elementary schools, though voluntary instruction could be arranged at the request of parents in school buildings after teaching hours. The state school, 'the church of modern times', as Depretis described it, was the favourite weapon of the anti-clericals for fighting the church's hold over the masses[1] and equipping Italy for life in the nineteenth century. But the Left's anti-clerical fervour soon abated. In 1879 a bill to penalise the celebration of religious marriage, unless it had been preceded by civil marriage, was passed by the chamber but shelved in the senate. The Left became slowly reconciled to the Law of Guarantees, which was declared a fundamental law by the Council of State, and the period of greatest danger for the church was over.

The fault of the leaders of the Left was to harp on the disagreements and smile tolerantly on the hotheads in their own ranks, rather than try, like the Right, to damp down passions and help time to heal the breach. Anti-clerical demonstrations were allowed to fill the streets of Rome with clamour during these years, though on the whole ministers kept away from them. Depretis and Mancini, however, went further than Minghetti in insisting that bishops should apply for the *exequatur*. Instructions were issued that, if they refused, they were to be deprived of their spiritual prerogatives as well as the temporalities of their office. The threat was effective and the Vatican yielded: after 1877 the *exequatur* clause of the Law of Guarantees caused little further trouble.[2] It was thus in administrative practice rather than in legislation that the rule of the Left differed from that of the Right. For many supporters of the government the Law of Guarantees was a maximum concession, and their pressure often caused its spirit, and sometimes its letter, to be violated.

From the side of the Papacy there were occasional gestures which gladdened the hearts of patriotic Italian Catholics and quickened their hopes of a better future. One such occurred during the last illness of Victor Emmanuel II. Before he died on 9 January 1878, the King sent a message to the Pope, regretting the personal displeasure he had caused him in the past but denying any intention of harming religion. Pius IX was greatly moved and rejoiced that Victor Emmanuel, though formally excommunicated, received the sacraments and died a good Catholic. Though no bishop or high dignitary of the church attended the funeral, a few priests were permitted to walk in the procession to the Pantheon and requiem masses were held in northern Italy.[3]

[1] Chabod, *Storia*, p. 265. Compulsory religious instruction had been instituted by the Piedmontese Lex Casati of 1859.

[2] Halperin, p. 407.

[3] Pirri, XXV, pp. 427–32, 439; G. Massari, *La vita ed il regno di Vittorio Emanuele II di Savoia* (3rd ed., Milan 1880), p. 591; Halperin, pp. 465–9.

A month later, on 7 February, Pius IX died at the age of eighty-six, after the longest papal reign in history. The conduct of the next conclave had been a matter of concern to foreign and Italian statesmen ever since 1870. Some cardinals, notably Manning, now urged that it be held outside Italy; but the leading Catholic governments strongly opposed such a course.[1] In Italy both Right and Left acknowledged the obligation to ensure a free election, as a matter of national honour. Demonstrations were banned in Rome, parliament was kept adjourned and public order strictly enforced. Crispi, the newly-appointed Minister of Interior, warned the cardinals, with characteristic brutality, that if they decided to leave Italy, they would be escorted to the frontiers with the full honours due to them by the Law of Guarantees, but that the Vatican would be occupied and they would never be allowed to return. On 20 February Gioacchino Pecci, Archbishop of Perugia, was elected in one of the freest conclaves in the church's history and took the title of Leo XIII. The Law of Guarantees had triumphantly survived its first great test. But hopes of a conciliatory gesture from the new Pope were quickly disappointed. As a first symbolic act of protest the papal benediction, customary after election, was pronounced inside St Peter's, not from the external loggia overlooking the piazza. There would be no provocation, no challenges, declared the new Secretary of State in March, 'but a firm stand on principles'.[2] Soon afterwards the claim to the temporal power was reasserted and there was no interruption in the flow of remonstrations from the Vatican.

The gulf between church and state thus showed no signs of narrowing, and all attempts to bridge it were wrecked by the intransigents on either side. The church defined its views on abstention from the polls more precisely. In 1871 the Holy Penitentiary declared that it was 'not expedient' (*non expedit*) for Catholics to vote in parliamentary elections, a ruling that Pius IX himself confirmed just before the election of 1874. Three years later, to remove any remaining uncertainty, the Holy Penitentiary changed the *non expedit* to a categorical *non licet*.[3] Catholics obedient to papal wishes were thus forced to withdraw from the political life of the nation into a closed life of their own and became 'internal émigrés'.[4] But they were by no means inactive. The aim of the church was to keep the faithful separate from the rest of the nation, free from the contamination of liberalism. For this purpose it set out to organise the laity in a network of associations soon to become known as Catholic Action. A start had been

[1] Engel-Jánosi, I, pp. 200–6.
[2] ibid., p. 214.
[3] Chabod, *Storia*, p. 516, note 2: Spadolini, *L'opposizione cattolica*, pp. 150–1.
[4] Vercesi, *Tre papi*, p. 109.

made in 1865, but all that had been achieved was destroyed by the government's repressive action during the war with Austria. In 1867 the Society of Italian Catholic Youth was founded, with the motto 'Prayer, Action, Sacrifice'. From its ranks four years later came the initiative for the creation of a single national organisation which would embrace and coordinate the activities of all militant Catholics throughout Italy. This was achieved in June 1874 when the first Catholic congress assembled at Venice.

The aim of Catholic Action was to defend Catholic dogma and morals, the liberty of the church and the independence of the Pope against the tyranny of the state. It was built on the assumption that the 'revolution' had triumphed, at least in the short run, and that liberal Italy would not just wither away. In the recent past many Catholics had trusted in Providence to punish the church's enemies; 'protest and wait' was all they could do.[1] But now 'the era of illusions' was over, and action was required. 'Catholics', urged a leading orator at the Venice congress, 'let us pray to God that the revolution die to-morrow, but then let us work as if it must live for ever'.[2] The movement was not reactionary; it looked forward. From the outset it denied any link with legitimism and threw over the Bourbon cause. Nor would it have been satisfied with restoration of the temporal power. Its aims were much vaster: the reconquest of Italy for Christianity, the relinking of Italy and the Papacy, the launching of a general counter-offensive against 'the sons of Belial' and the spirit of the nineteenth century. Its members, in the words of Meda, a leading Catholic politician of the future, were 'neither liberal Catholics, nor national Catholics, nor legitimist Catholics, nor Catholics of any other kind: but just Catholics'.[3] The Syllabus was their inspiration. Their leaders demanded unquestioning devotion to the Pope and total submission to ecclesiastical authority. The Risorgimento and the 'revolution' were to be fought without quarter, not by conspiracy or violent rebellion, but with the 'revolution's' own weapons – freedom of the press, freedom of association, freedom of thought and speech. Every legal means would be used to undermine and destroy the law.[4]

From small beginnings Catholic Action expanded steadily. The second congress, held at Florence in 1875, set up a permanent organisation called the Opera dei Congressi, with a central executive and committees in every region, diocese and parish. Nicotera dissolved the third congress in 1876, for reasons of 'public order'; but thereafter, for nearly thirty years, con-

[1] The phrase was that of Cardinal Giacomo Antonelli, the papal Secretary of State, in October 1870. De Rosa, *L'Azione Cattolica*, I, p. 54.

[2] Fonzi, pp. 32–3; De Rosa, *L'Azione Cattolica*, I, p. 93.

[3] Fonzi, p. 55.

[4] De Rosa, *L'Azione Cattolica*, I, pp. 99–100; Spadolini, *L'opposizione cattolica*, pp. 105–6.

gresses were held at frequent intervals. A Catholic press grew up in close association with the movement. Education was its constant care, and great efforts were made to found Catholic schools, free from the grip of the secular state, which would form 'a dam against the murky torrent of corruption and impiety' that threatened Christian society.[1] The congresses also concerned themselves with religious observance, with celebrations and pilgrimages, and with the expansion of the missionary Marian Congregations. The committees of the Opera collected Peter's Pence and organised demonstrations of loyalty to the Pope. Catholics were also urged to be active in local government, which was regarded as non-political and therefore not affected by the *non expedit*. It was not easy for an obedient Catholic to occupy a position of responsibility, even in a small commune, when he might be involved in the organisation of secular education or the enforcement of laws such as that on civil marriage, which the Pope had condemned. But an essential part of the Catholic Action programme was to penetrate local administration and thus prepare a secure base on the periphery from which eventually to move inwards to the conquest of the state.[2]

There thus grew up among the Catholic laity a militant and fanatical generation. Many clergy at first looked with suspicion on the new phenomenon. Bishops disliked the intrusion of laymen into ecclesiastical affairs and felt their own authority threatened by a centralised movement so blindly obedient to the Vatican.[3] But as one intransigent after another was appointed to the sees that fell vacant, the number of doubters in positions of influence declined. Squeezed between the militants of Catholic Action and the aggressive anti-clericals, first the liberal Catholics, then the more cautious advocates of conciliation were silenced.[4] The church, deliberately cutting itself off from non-Catholic society, continued to centralise and tighten its discipline over clergy and laity alike, and so 'prepared in abstention' for the decisive battle of the future.[5]

[1] De Rosa, *L'Azione Cattolica*, I, pp. 75–6.

[2] ibid., pp. 81–2; Spadolini, *L'opposizione cattolica*, p. 95.

[3] Fonzi, pp. 56–9.

[4] Notable conciliators were a Jesuit priest, Curci, founder of the great Jesuit review, *Civiltà Cattolica*, whose declaration in 1877 that Rome now 'belonged to the Italian people' led to his expulsion from his order; and Don Giovanni Bosco, founder of the Salesian teaching order (canonised as St John Bosco in 1934), who had many friends among Italian politicians and often acted as unofficial intermediary between church and government.

[5] Chabod, *Storia*, pp. 258–9. The formula 'Preparation in abstention' was first used in 1880 and never condemned by Leo XIII.

Finance and Administration

The grim financial struggle continued for five years after 1870. Sella and Minghetti[1] retained the hated *macinato* tax and made no concessions. When taxation failed to fill the gap between revenue and expenditure, they preferred to print new paper money rather than resort to further borrowing. Expenditure which the Left regarded as essential was refused. In April 1873 it was decided not to enlarge the Taranto naval arsenal, to meet the supposed threat from clerical France. Next year compulsory primary education was shelved. The Left's gains in the election of 1874 revealed growing impatience with what Sella himself called the status of 'the most heavily taxed people in Europe'. But Minghetti exhorted parliament to one final effort, and on 16 March 1876 he was able to announce that, after fifteen arduous years, the budget had been balanced.[2] This was the Right's last triumph, and one of its greatest.

At the time the magnitude of the achievement was less apparent than the sufferings it involved. Critics of the Right, conservative as well as radical, accused Sella and Minghetti of sacrificing economic development to the dogma of a balanced budget. As Depretis observed, economy to the bone maimed vital muscles and nerves. The Left also denounced the class character of the Right's fiscal policy, as exemplified in the high proportion of revenue drawn from indirect taxes, and claimed that it was deepening the gulf between 'real' and 'legal' Italy.[3] There was indeed a disturbing growth of social unrest in these years. The financial crash of 1873, which affected all Europe, ended a period of inflationary prosperity and depression set in. Italian credit was again shaken and the lira reached a record low level.[4] The Right was nevertheless able to complete the administrative structure of the Italian state. Among its most notable achievements were the unification of the seven separate fiscal systems of the old states and the reconstruction of the armed forces. The reform of the army was the work of Ricotti, a tough single-minded Piedmontese general who served

[1] Sella was Lanza's Minister of Finance from 1869 to 1873; Minghetti was his own Minister of Finance from 1873 to 1876.

[2] Minghetti, like all Italian Ministers of Finance of the period, excluded from his calculations expenditure on railway construction, which was classed as 'extraordinary'. If this is included, the surpluses for 1875 and 1876 become deficits of 33 and 28 millions, and the budget remained unbalanced until 1898. From 1862 to 1875 revenue increased from 450 million to 1,058 million lire, expenditure from 906 million to 1,091 million. Coppola d'Anna, p. 85.

[3] In fact the proportion of tax revenue drawn from consumption taxes had fallen from 47·4% in 1861–5 to 46·9% in 1866–70 and 44·4% in 1871–5; it rose again steadily after 1876 under governments of the Left. Coppola d'Anna, p. 102.

[4] In May 1873 it was quoted at 17·6% below the French franc. The pre-1914 rate of exchange at par was 25 lire = 25 French francs = $5 = £1.

as Minister for War. Though always short of funds, he created a modern force of ten army corps and twenty divisions, with a peace-time strength of 224,000 which could be increased to 350,000 by mobilising the first-line reserve. By 1873 the worst gaps in Italy's defences had been filled and the essential fortifications and strategic railways had been built. The army was also designed to perform a wider function than mere defence: it was to be a 'school of national education'. Conscription, normally for a term of three years, was enforced on a national, not regional, basis. Each regiment was recruited from two distinct regions, speaking different dialects, and was stationed in a third; and its location was changed roughly every four years.[1] This reform was not popular, least of all in Sicily where there had been no conscription before 1861. But over the years the barracks, like the school, played a major part in fusing regional loyalties and fostering Italian patriotism. The navy, too, was transformed. In 1861 the small Piedmontese and Neapolitan fleets were still built entirely of wood and one-quarter of their ships were powered by sail. The humiliating defeat of Lissa was followed by a period of demoralisation and inaction. But after 1870 an ambitious building programme was devised by Benedetto Brin, a brilliant naval engineer, and in May 1876 the *Duilio* was launched, the first of several ironclads which rivalled the greatest ships of the British navy in size and power.

The advent of the Left brought no immediate change of fiscal policy. While in opposition it had clamoured in the same breath for lower taxation and increased expenditure, an infallible receipt for political popularity. Once in office, Depretis flatly declared that he would not 'yield a single lira of the revenues' and would defend the solvency of the budget. Plans for basic tax reform dwindled to minor reliefs for the worst-hit taxpayers. But though the Left resisted the temptation to destroy the work of sixteen years for the sake of immediate popularity,[2] it soon showed that it lacked the toughness of the Right. In December 1877 Agostino Magliani took over the Ministry of Finance from Depretis and retained it, with only two short breaks, for eleven years. Magliani was a brilliant Neapolitan who had served in the Bourbon financial administration. Personally honest but politically weak and accommodating, he was the perfect instrument for a parliamentary majority which wished to give politics precedence over finance. His acceptance of office coincided with the end of the economic

[1] Rochat, pp. 299–300. The only exception to the rule was the creation in 1873 of regiments of Alpini, recruited entirely from the Alpine districts. As Rochat points out, the system also had a more specific political purpose: 'Units composed of soldiers from different regions would be more efficient and disciplined instruments for the repression of popular insurrections of a regional or social character.'

[2] Corbino, II, pp. 291–3. In 1880 the state absorbed 11·38% of the national income, compared with 6·96% in 1862. Romeo, p. 32.

depression and he initiated a decade of 'lively finance', marked by high expenditure on armaments and public works and heavy borrowing. This was accompanied by minor cuts in direct taxation, designed to attract foreign capital and stimulate the 'productive forces' of the nation.[1] His critics accused him of jugglery and illusionism, and of concealing budget deficits by ingenuity in accounting. But his persuasive oratory exuded confidence and he was adept at soothing deputies who longed to be convinced, against their better judgement, of the rosiness of the financial situation.[2]

Magliani was responsible for two important fiscal reforms: the abolition of the *macinato* tax and the restoration of convertibility. Between 1871 and 1880 the *macinato* tax yielded an average of 69 million sorely needed lire every year. The chamber of deputies was very ready to vote its abolition, but reluctant to authorise the new taxes which the more cautious senate insisted should replace it. Cairoli made the first attempt at abolition in July 1878. Over the next two years the tax was the main issue in Italian politics. It caused a constitutional clash between the senate and the chamber, dominated the 1880 election and became 'the devourer of ministries'. At last, in July 1880, the senate reluctantly approved Magliani's new plan to abolish it in stages over four years, thus acknowledging that the removal of a major political grievance must take precedence over purely financial considerations.[3]

The restoration of convertibility meant much to the Left because it regarded a depreciated currency as a national humiliation. In 1880 Magliani set about finding the necessary financial backing abroad. The growing tension with France over Tunis hampered him[4] and the Rothschilds in Paris refused their help; but in November he was able to tell parliament that the non-convertible paper currency would disappear by the spring of 1883. A syndicate of British, French and Italian bankers was formed to float a loan of 644 million lire. This was sufficient to reduce the note circulation by one-third and more than double the metallic currency. The immediate results were excellent. The lira appreciated by over 10% in 1880 and three years later reached parity with the French gold franc for the first time since 1866. Between 1881 and 1887 there was a further great influx of foreign capital, directed mainly to transport and public utilities, and Italian bonds rose to unprecedented heights on the Paris Bourse.

In the years that followed, however, Italy's financial position deterior-

[1] Carocci, pp. 79 ff., 337–8. On Depretis's favourable attitude to foreign capital and contacts with foreign bankers, see Carocci, pp. 52, 98 ff., 169 ff.

[2] Corbino, III, pp. 40–2.

[3] ibid., II, pp. 297–306; Cilibrizzi, II, pp. 182–7, 200–1.

[4] See below, pp. 107 ff.

ated rapidly. The agricultural crisis, which grew acute soon after 1880, should have warned the government that difficult times lay ahead. But industrial development and buoyant revenue generated the illusion of permanent prosperity. The pace of inflation quickened. Between January 1882 and December 1886 the issue banks increased their note circulation from 732 to 1,032 million lire[1] and reduced the metallic coverage from 51% to 38%. The government borrowed freely and spent lavishly. In the nine years after 1880 expenditure increased by 58%, revenue by only 18%.[2] Railways and roads were constructed on a grand scale, ports were improved, slums were cleared in Naples and speculative building schemes launched in Rome. In 1882 eight new infantry brigades were formed and the number of army corps was increased from ten to twelve. Under the direction of Brin, who served as Minister for the Navy from 1876 to 1878 and from 1884 to 1891, heavy naval building continued, with special emphasis on expensive large ships. The acquisition of a colony further increased the strain. In 1885 the lira once again dropped below the gold franc. Next March Magliani, after postponing the day of reckoning for years by evasion and artifice, was forced to admit a budget deficit, and in June 1886 the speech from the throne called for 'severe parsimony'.

A substantial proportion of the state's expenditure was absorbed by the railways. Their future was already a burning issue when the Left took over in 1876. The Right had advocated state management. Depretis and a majority of his followers believed that the state was unfit to run an industry and supported the principle of private enterprise. The government's proposals were savagely attacked by the Extreme Left as a sell-out to bankers, speculators and monopoly capitalists. An important section of the Left agreed with this criticism, notably two of the Pentarchs, Zanardelli[3] and Baccarini. After nine years of heated debate, complicated by the manœuvres of rival financial and banking groups, Depretis finally got his way. By the conventions of 1885 the operation of the railways was entrusted to two reconstructed companies. These were to share profits with the state, whose property the railways remained. With the intention of stimulating traffic between north and south and wiping out the last traces of regional antagonism, the companies were organised longitudinally down the whole length of Italy, one on the Adriatic, the other on the Tyrrhenian

[1] *Sommario*, p. 163; Corbino, III, p. 437.

[2] Coppola d'Anna, p. 87. The national debt grew from 8,447 million lire in January 1876 to 9,833 million in January 1881 and 11,503 million in the middle of 1887. Corbino, II, p. 321, III, p. 376.

[3] On two occasions, in 1877 and 1883, Zanardelli resigned office rather than support proposals for what he regarded as a monopolistic railway system.