

The Main Themes of the History of the Southern Question

Italian political writings of our day frequently raise the problem of the date to be ascribed to the birth of the "Southern question".

In the post-war period, there has been a great increase in research comparing the economic and social conditions of the different regions of Italy. Vigorous political action has been taken with a view to reducing the contrasts and the different rates of growth which now separate the two Italies. (Net per capita income in Southern Italy is estimated at about half that of the Northern part of the country). It is therefore natural that historical studies should show a renewed interest in the origin of this widening of the internal gap. This process undoubtedly goes fairly far back, even though the country has only realized its existence in relatively recent times.

The assertion that the "Southern question" was born in 1861 is correct, at least from a certain point of view, since this is a national problem which, as such, cannot be formulated, let alone understood, except in the context of political unity. Nevertheless, some reference is indispensable to earlier periods (during which Italian history was split up between a number of small states) in a study of the political and economic evolution of modern Italy, and it is even of some use for more modest research such as the present essay. In the following pages, we propose to make a rapid review of the most important writings published over the years immediately following political unification up to the twenties, in connection with a problem which is now a hundred years old.

Italy, as must always be borne in mind, was not unified either politically or economically before 1860. A series of tightly knit internal customs barriers, which followed the political boundaries, made inter-state trade extremely difficult, and greatly reduced its

volume. The lack of land communications, the elongated and mountainous configuration of the peninsula and the non-completeness of the economies of the different regions constituted a series of negative factors which, for centuries, restricted relations between those provinces without a common border and acted as a brake on the reciprocal attraction which might have been stimulated by the feeling of belonging to one nation and hence having a common destiny.

There was, it is true, the unifying tradition in the form of a language, but this cultural tie was felt only by small minorities and was swamped among the people by the numerous dialects, which often differed very widely among themselves. Even in the upper bourgeoisie it was by no means common to travel across the whole of Italy by the inconvenient means of transport available at the time. An enterprising Milanese was more likely to travel to Paris on business than to Florence, and a Sicilian landowner to go to London rather than to Rome.

Life was generally dominated by a deeply rooted provincialism in which the spirit of enlightenment and of modern times had only painfully succeeded in opening an occasional breach. The individual states were bent on pursuing an out of date mercantilist policy. Each of them was struggling with the difficulties, large or small, of its own development, had no time to look further afield, and was chary of collaborating with its neighbours.

But all this changed overnight in 1861 when, through a turn of events which appeared miraculous, the country's destiny was altered and the local governments were overrun. The same legal system was imposed throughout the peninsula, and a national policy made ready to assume the heritage of so many isolated and conflicting policies. The Italians of the various regions were impelled to bring into line their points of view by the very force of things, and they began to discover both what their country was and what it was worth, a point on which most of them had been deeply ignorant and on which they had only preconceived and confused ideas.

The move towards a common policy on the part of North and South was imposed by administrative necessities and hastened by military and security considerations rather than by patriotic enthusiasm or economic reasons. It is no accident, but a significant indication of a complex historical situation, that the first occasion for a critical analysis of the real position in the South was afforded

by the brigandage which exploded when Garibaldi and his volunteers had not yet left the South.

These outbreaks raged for a number of years in almost the whole of that region, but particularly in the Basilicata, in the poorest part of Calabria and in Sicily. It represented the reaction of a primitive society to external events which had upset its old-established but precarious equilibrium. Former officials of the Bourbon regime found themselves in the same ranks as common criminals, small-town politicians, military men who had been dismissed, and townsmen whose feelings had been wounded and whose interests had been affected by the sudden imposition of Piedmontese legislation and by the arrival of a foreign bureaucracy.

"The first bandits were men from the Bourbon armies disbanded by Garibaldi who had switched from the job of gendarme, the only function of a soldier under Ferdinando II and Francesco II, to that of brigand. They could hardly have chosen a better moment. The local authorities had been abandoned to their own devices; the police had been dissolved, war was still raging, looting was easy, and priests, the gentry and the king were hand in glove with the bandits in the hope of winning back their losses" (1).

But even on that occasion brigandage showed how deep its roots extended in the social history of the South. The parliamentary commission which was given the mandate to enquire into these bloody events did, it is true, display a certain optimism in its final report. It implied that the armed revolts were the work of common criminals and could have been suppressed by firm police action. However, this judgment was hasty and based on inaccurate information. Brigandage might be overcome, but it always remained a latent danger, since many of the factors which had made it possible continued to exist.

For centuries, brigandage had always had a dual character in the life of the South. On the one hand, it had been an instrument of policy on the part of the Bourbons, to be used in a spirit of conservatism against any internal or external attempt to undermine traditional values. On the other hand, it had represented the dramatic form of the poor peasants' struggle against the land-

(1) A. ORIANI, *La lotta politica in Italia*, Bologna, 1941, p. 162 *et seq.* Cf. also *Il brigantaggio nelle province napoletane*, Report on behalf of the Commission of Enquiry of the Chamber of Deputies by MASSARI and CASTAGNOLA, Naples, 1863.

owning classes. The story of brigandage is not only that of the loyalty to and connivance with the reigning dynasty on the part of many of the bandits, but it is also the history of the question of public lands, of the battles fought for the ground owned by the local authorities, of endless legal controversies, of all the encroachments on the peasants' rights, of the resentment left in their minds and of the violent acts to which they often abandoned themselves. This essentially "political" thesis of the nature of Southern brigandage, of which a modern historian has provided a convincing demonstration particularly applicable to Apulia (2), was outlined by F. S. Nitti in a brilliant essay published at the end of the last century (3).

Brigandage, which in its cruder forms dragged on until 1866, raised the alarm among Italians of the other regions, but it was not sufficient by itself for people to talk of a clearly identified Southern problem. This gradually took shape, as knowledge of the South increased and as the various geographical and social aspects of Southern life were clarified, thus making possible and indeed easy the necessary comparison with the rest of the peninsula.

The construction of a railway system connecting the Po Valley with Sicily encouraged travellers to undertake trips which a few decades back would have appeared adventurous, and made a powerful contribution to lifting the veil of mystery from the South and revealing it in its true light to the country. Naples in particular began to exercise a certain attraction, since it offered a remarkable sight. It combined an ancient fascination and famous natural beauty with a huge subproletariat, the wretched inhabitants of a city which had ceased to be a capital. It had no industry, but the largest population of all Italian towns, and was still one of the first in Europe. Two books dealing with Naples came out in the second decade after unity. They point forward to later developments and are still of considerable documentary value. One is called *Napoli ad occhio nudo*, and is by the Tuscan Renato Fucini, a writer affected and preoccupied by the distressing poverty of the city. The other book, with deeper social implications, is *La Miseria di Napoli* by Jessie Meriton White, the woman friend of Alberto Mario, and English by birth. She had taken an active part in the Mazzini and

(2) A. LUCARELLI, *Il brigantaggio politico delle Puglie dopo il 1860*, Bari, 1946.

(3) F. S. NITTI, *Il brigantaggio meridionale durante il regime borbonico*, reprinted in *Scritti sulla questione meridionale*, I, Bari, 1958.

Garibaldi movements and served the cause of Italian freedom with daring and self-sacrifice.

But, as early as 1861, the moderate Milanese paper *La perseveranza* had been publishing the articles from Naples by the young Pasquale Villari. He subsequently became member of parliament and rose to be Minister of Education. For years, Villari continued to illustrate and denounce the numerous evils from which his city was suffering. Later on, in a series of writings in *L'opinione*, he dealt in detail with a number of burning problems of Southern society. This was the origin of the *Lettere meridionali* which created such a profound impression that the year in which they were published — 1875 — was considered a landmark in the history of the Southern problem (4).

In that work, Villari courageously tackled a situation which appeared to call for prompt and resolute action. He made no attempt to illude himself or anyone else. He denounced the danger to which the young state was exposed by the existence of extremely backward regions, and he did not fail to underline the close connection between certain unhealthy aspects of life there and the social structure of the area: "The camorra, brigandage, the mafia", he writes, "are the logical, natural and necessary consequences of certain social conditions which must be modified if there is to be any hope of being able to destroy these evils". But he was conservatively minded. He was afraid of far-reaching changes, and he was inclined to think that the South had a greater need of justice and good administration than of freedom. Hence, the remedies suggested by him did not go beyond a legal type of reform, fortified by charitable works, and these remedies were bound even then to appear inadequate to dissolve the bonds holding together this suffering and much-abused society and which made it almost impervious to outside influences.

In 1875, too, there was published in Florence a book by Leopoldo Franchetti, *Condizioni economiche e amministrative delle province napoletane*. On the basis of a study carried out on the spot in the poorest regions of mainland Southern Italy, Franchetti raised the problem of the few benefits accruing and the considerable harm done to these regions by the sudden introduction of a legisla-

(4) Published in book form at Turin in 1877 as *Lettere Meridionali*. They were subsequently reprinted on several occasions.

tion which, though perhaps suited to provinces which had attained a certain degree of political maturity was bound to produce different effects in any backward society. If, therefore, the administrative unification imposed on the whole of Italy in 1861 had been a mistake, the nation should bear the blame of having, in another respect too, betrayed the expectations of the mainland South. In the economical field and in that of public works, Calabria, the Basilicata, the Abruzzi and Molise had been sacrificed to the other regions. The new and onerous tax policy had borne particularly hard on those parts of the country which had no industry and little trade, and had increased the burden on the countryside, already hard-pressed by the vicissitudes of a primitive agriculture, by the iniquitous forms of land tenure and by the shortcomings of the local authorities.

The following year, Franchetti and another young Tuscan, Sidney Sonnino, after having covered the island in great detail, brought out their classical survey of Sicily. Faithful to their intention of investigating the basic reasons of the unhealthy phenomena rampant in that area, the two researchers drew up an impressive document which was remarkable for its novelty, its liveliness and its precise and factual clarity. The two men had divided up the work between them. Franchetti threw special light on the political and administrative state of the island, while Sonnino dealt with the lives of the peasants, the land tenure system, property, usury and so on (5). But the two books were perfectly complementary in their description of the feudal arrangements which still governed many of the social relations, and showed the interlocking of the political factor with economics, and the harsh contrast which still prevailed in Sicily between the world of the "oppressors" and that of the "oppressed".

This work had another important consequence. With Franchetti and Sonnino, Sicily made its entry into the social literature of the new Italy in which it was destined to retain a leading place. The value of these two books stands out against the cloudy and deliberately optimistic conclusion of the parliamentary commission, which had gone to Sicily to study the same facts at that time.

(5) L. FRANCHETTI and S. SONNINO, *La Sicilia*, vol. I, by Franchetti: *Condizioni politiche e amministrative dell'isola*; vol. II, by Sonnino: *I contadini in Sicilia*.

In his investigation, Sonnino made repeated references to the irrational way in which the land tax was levied in Italy. He also touched on the problem of the distribution of tax burdens between regions of different degrees of wealth and development, and it was from this armoury that the Southern campaign was to draw its arguments in its initial stages.

As early as 1876, Betocchi had taken some soundings on these lines (6), but it was only later that Pantaleoni (7) and Bodio (8) made a scientific study on the relation between wealth and the incidence of taxation in the various regions of Italy for the decade 1880-1890 and succeeded in throwing into relief the disproportionate weight falling on the South. Pantaleoni in particular had proved statistically that, although the South possessed only 27 per cent of the country's wealth, it paid 32 per cent of the taxes.

At the beginning of the 20th century, these researches were carried further in two books by F. S. Nitti which immediately had nation-wide repercussions, *Il bilancio dello Stato dal 1862 al 1896-1897* and *Nord e Sud* (9). Nitti carried out a detailed retrospective analysis of the budgets of the Italian state, and paid special attention to the nature and incidence of the taxes, the territorial distribution of public works, of expenditure on the army and the navy, education and the civil service. He came to the conclusion that, partly because of the bias of legislation, and partly because of an inherent tendency for wealth to become concentrated in particular areas, the South had given the state in the first forty years of national unity much more than it should have done, and much more than the state had returned to it. The poorest part of the nation was thus contributing to the development of the richest and best endowed part.

Nitti regretted the injustices revealed by his conclusions but showed not the slightest trace of backward-looking nostalgia. He remained firmly convinced of the benefits which the Risorgimento had brought both parts of Italy. "Political unity", he wrote in the preface to *Nord e Sud*, "has conferred on us the best things

(6) A. BETOCCHI, *Settecentrali e Meridionali*, Naples, 1877.

(7) M. PANTALEONI, *Dell'ammontare probabile della ricchezza privata in Italia*, Rome, 1884.

(8) L. BODIO, *Di alcuni indici misuratori del movimento economico in Italia*, Rome, 1901.

(9) Both these works have been reissued in *Scritti sulla questione meridionale*, II, Bari, 1958.

that we have — the supremacy of the civilian authorities, the reawakening of the individual conscience, the desire for expansion which is now beginning to extend to the whole nation and which will make our fortune. If Italy is to get anywhere in this world, it can only be as a united nation". However, he still firmly believed that unity had been achieved through the economic sacrifice of the mainland South, necessary and inevitable perhaps, but very painful. That region, on the eve of liberation, was in many ways better off than the rest of Italy. In 1860, the kingdom of Naples had a flexible fiscal régime which was by no means burdensome. It possessed 65 per cent of the metal coin circulating in Italy, and its public national debt was lower, comparatively speaking, than that of Piedmont. It owned a huge expanse of public and ecclesiastical land.

But, after unity, all this changed for the worse. The fiscal system was replaced in 1861 by a much more oppressive one; the coin was channelled towards the North as a result of various developments, and the public and ecclesiastical lands ended up by being taken over by the new state which used the proceeds to finance public works located for the greater part in the northern regions. At the same time, Nitti went on to point out, a start was made on the costly process of industrialization, which enriched the North but led to a crisis for the Southern handworkers, and indeed for the whole economy of that part of the country.

A number of Nitti's contentions were incontrovertible, but others could not be substantiated by history. Giustino Fortunato, the member of parliament for his own region, was like Nitti a fervent believer in national unity, and in a way the man who discovered the Southern question. In an indulgent but scrupulous criticism of Nitti's views, Fortunato insisted on the need to comply with historical accuracy.

Born in 1848 at Rionero in Vulture of a leading family with a tradition of loyalty to the Bourbons, Giustino Fortunato devoted his whole life, with a noble and disinterested passion to the cause of the poor, unhappy South. All aspects of the Southern problem, one way or another, are reflected in his work. It is his outstanding merit to have exposed, by closely-knit geographical and geological arguments, the legend of the South as a rich land favoured by nature — "the most beautiful and the most fertile country of Europe", as Minghetti had said like so many others, indeed "a country for which God exhausted his treasures", according to Petru-

celli della Gattina. If there are irrigable and potentially fruitful lands in the South, there are unfortunately many more which must be regarded as of little or no value, in view of the fact that they are arid or clayey, windswept or devastated by malaria. These are naturally relegated to pasture or, at the cost of intense efforts, forced to grow a meagre crop by a peasant population which they cannot support.

This emphasis on natural factors deepened Fortunato's pessimism as regards the South and led him to write: "The Southern question is purely and simply one of a country which for centuries has been condemned by geography and history to poverty — economic and moral poverty, the one more depressing than the other and from which only political unity can redeem it...".

In his reply to Nitti, Giustino Fortunato felt obliged to sketch a much less favourable picture of the old Bourbon regime. Only mercantilist prejudice, he noted, could lead a writer to confuse metal coin with wealth, although the Naples region undoubtedly had an abundance of the former. However, this cumbrous and painfully circulating mass was rather a symptom of a primitive and stagnant economy which was completely ignorant of the credit and banking mechanism. Fortunato denies that the South saddled the new Italian Kingdom with a smaller amount of public debt than the other local states, especially Piedmont, although the latter's budget had had to bear the cost of the wars of independence. He goes on to point out that, of the public lands which had come into the hands of the Italian state, only 44 per cent belonged to the South. And above all he launches a closely reasoned attack on the Bourbon fiscal system which was largely to blame for the fearful backwardness of the economy and which still held back part of the country. It was possibly the case that taxes were relatively light in the Kingdom of Naples, but they were undoubtedly badly distributed. Moreover the customs barriers formed "an immense wall, worse than in the middle ages", round the Kingdom. And the state, if it did not raise much in taxes, hardly gave back anything to the country by way of return. The army absorbed almost the whole of the budget receipts. The cities were short of schools; the countryside of roads, the beaches of access roads, "and trade was still carried on on horseback as in Eastern lands". "Of the two terrible scourges, according to Cavour, the marked poverty and the rampant corruption which was caused by it, the Bourbons were the expression and not the cause. They

were confronted with, and possibly aggravated, but certainly did not create the Southern problem, the causes of which go far further back, and are much more profound. At the exhibitions of world industry, in London in 1855, and in Paris in 1857, where even Turkey and Japan put their products on show, we were the only ones to be absent, we, the inhabitants of the little China of Europe... Is this the happy kingdom which was free from heavy taxation? "... "No, it is not possible to glorify the past at the expense of the present; we Southerners have obtained little or, to be more precise, we have not obtained everything we might justly hope to obtain from the sudden disappearance of our autonomy, in the year of miracles and dreams of 1860, but we have certainly not lost anything!" (10).

But, having made these historical reservations, Fortunato followed Nitti in criticizing the Italian fiscal system, and indeed strengthened Nitti's case by means of his own studies and by observations drawn from those studies which were being published at the time by Carano-Donvito (11). There was not a single kind of tax in the vast range covered by Italian legislation which did not involve a glaring injustice to the South. The land tax took no account of the low productivity of Southern soil, nor of the enormous mortgages, effected at usurious rates, which placed such a strain on income from the land, as is proved by the continuous expropriations and adjudications of farms to creditors. The tax on property was applied to almost all the peasant hovels, merely because they happened to be in big urban agglomerations (the so-called peasant cities), while it did not apply to the huts of the valley of the Po and of Liguria and the farm-houses of Tuscany, Umbria and the Marches. The taxes on food-stuffs weighed heavily on a country in which almost the whole of people's incomes went on satisfying basic needs, and were regarded as "a levy on hunger". Lastly, tax evasion was much more frequent and much easier in the North, where personal wealth was now more common than real estate, but it was almost impossible in the South with its predominantly agricultural economy...

(10) G. FORTUNATO, "La questione meridionale e la riforma tributaria", in *Il Mezzogiorno e lo Stato italiano*, Florence, no date, II, pp. 335 and 337. These two volumes contain Fortunato's most important contributions to the study of the Southern problem.

(11) G. CARANO-DONVITO, "Il nostro sistema economico e la crisi meridionale", in *La riforma sociale*, December, 1903. By the same author cf. also *L'economia meridionale prima e dopo il Risorgimento*, Florence, 1938.

Indeed, Fortunato went even further than Nitti and Carano-Donvito, since he did not confine himself to a criticism, however important for the general economy of the South, of the distortions of the Italian fiscal system and of the unfair territorial allocation of public funds. He laid special emphasis on the importance of altering the general concept of the national budget which should pursue the interests of the well-to-do taxpayers and of the less fortunate regions. This reform was intended to remove the injustice which threw on the lower classes most of the burden and to reduce contributions from the anonymous mass of under-privileged proletarians, "each of which here in Italy pays an average of 6.15 lire for food, against 5.63 in France, 3.41 in Austria, 2.59 in Russia, 2.27 in Germany and 0.41 in England" (12).

This, Fortunato concluded, is another unpleasant aspect of the Southern question — the daily tragedy of so many poor people "for whom the state, and Italy itself, means nothing but military service, the flour tax or a levy on foodstuffs".

Fortunato linked the customs problem with taxation. A clear line could be traced from the Southern question to Italy's protectionist policy. The observation that the country's industrial development since unification had operated almost exclusively in the North's favour in day to day polemics was often linked with accusations and recriminations which, to tell the truth, did not always spring from dispassionate and objective judgments. In particular, there was no real foundation in the accusations that Northern industry had fallen upon the South immediately after unification and had reduced it to the level of a subjugated territory. This race for the Southern market could not have taken place in these terms or in this way, nor was there any justification for speaking of the immediate damage to trade resulting from political unification. It should indeed be recalled that in 1861 there were still no railways which were the technical prerequisites for the transport of a large number of products from the factories located at the foot of the Alps to the domestic market in the deep South. Moreover, and this is even more important, there was not even at that time a Northern industry adequately equipped to expand outside its traditional territory. Apart from the silk industry whose interests went beyond

(12) G. FORTUNATO, "La crisi bancaria e la XVIII legislatura", in *Il Mezzogiorno e lo Stato italiano*, I, p. 389.

the confines of Italy, the branch of Piedmontese and Lombard production which had made the greatest progress in the twenty years preceding unification, i.e. cotton, had not yet reached the point at which it could cover even local needs. So much so, that, about 1860, the Po Valley continued to import considerable quantities of foreign yarn and a wide range of linens. The engineering sector was even more backward, and hence dependent on imports. At that time, it was taking its first timid steps in Lombardy while the Northern steel industry, far from progressing, had been plunged into crisis by political unification, which had led to the adoption by Italy of a very light foreign customs tax and had thus exposed Italian production to irresistible competition by its much more advanced German, Swiss and English competitors.

It was only with the development and the gradual strengthening of industry on a much more extensive scale that the problem of territorial concentration really emerged. This trend was to lead very rapidly to one part of Italy dominating the other. The date of this process must therefore be situated at least twenty years later, and what is somewhat superficially referred to (with political overtones) as the "subjugation of the agricultural South to the industrial North" begins, at the earliest, about 1890 when the small factories of the South displayed the inadequacy of their rudimentary equipment, and when, no longer protected by the high cost of transport, they were unable to compete with the more modern and more efficient industries of the North.

But this does not affect the main issue, since the strengthening of the structure of Italian industry was not a spontaneous process but bore the hall mark of protectionism and of state favours. The history of Italy's big industry runs from the first revision of the general tariff of 1878 to the more radical modification voted in 1887 and to the numerous measures taken in support of various forms of industry, through military supplies, subventions, premia, credits, rescue operations and so on. In other words, the growth of industry was parallel, in its initial stages, with state intervention. Official support led to the creation of a number of enterprises which, had they been left to their own devices and exposed to international competition, would either never have seen the light or would have had a much harder time.

Protectionism, by imposing choices and priorities, upset the natural equilibrium which the national economy was seeking labo-

riously to achieve. And, while it created marked discriminations between industry and agriculture, and also, in the numerous industrial openings available, between one type of manufacture and another, it stimulated the territorial factor in a country such as Italy where the economic pattern varied widely already. All the historical and geographical data pointed to the valley of the Po as the best location for the establishment of the new industries. A large number of factors operated in favour of the North — its proximity to the more advanced regions of Europe, on which it could draw for assistance in know-how and capital, supplies of labour (which was both more highly skilled and more rationally distributed), a much more satisfactory communications system, a market within easy reach for its goods, and more extensive and accessible credit to meet the needs of the growing economy. Slightly later, in the last decade of the century, when the great new invention of electricity was to place at Italy's disposal an immensely valuable source of energy, the nearness of the Northern industries to the main waterpower resources of the Alps was to give them an overwhelming competitive superiority over their opposite numbers in the South.

Fortunato was acutely aware of the fact that there was no going back on industrialization, and that it was an essential part of modern civilization which Italy could not forego. However, he criticized the heavy-handed and often improvised manner in which this social transformation was being handled; and he was distressed by the excessively high price paid for this change and by the injustice involved in making the poor agricultural areas of the South bear the whole burden.

He was not alone in defending free trade or a more cautious economic policy. Antonio de Viti de Marco, a radical member of parliament and a distinguished expert on finance, was fighting a battle in the South in support of much the same ideas. De Viti stigmatized the government's record, and stressed the advantages which could have been obtained if, by foregoing, at least in part, the costly defence of the new industries, the government had troubled to defend Southern exports of foodstuffs in the commercial treaties negotiated with other countries. This point of view was shared by well-known economists such as Maffeo Pantaleoni and Vilfredo Pareto, and by the group of scholars connected with the *Giornale degli economisti* which De Viti ran from 1890 to 1913.

In the North, too, there was a powerful current of opinion advocating this line. All the manufacturers of silk, i.e. of an industry producing mainly for export, came out in favour of free trade. Two of them, Gavazzi and Giretti, had sponsored the "Associazione per la libertà economica". And men of all tendencies, such as Luigi Einaudi, Guglielmo Ferrero, Attilio Gabiati, Gino Luzzatto and others, fought against two particularly unhealthy aspects of protectionism, the tariffs supporting the steel and sugar industries. Later on, in 1914, De Viti was one of the men who promoted the "Lega antiprotezionista" which however was condemned to inaction by the outbreak of the war. At the end of the war, the old antiprotectionist group resumed its propaganda campaign, particularly in the *Unità* under Salvemini and in the *Riforma sociale*, a combative Turin review which was very close to Einaudi.

But many subscribed to free trade either because of their own interests or because of ideological conviction, on the ground that the excessive and overhasty protectionism was unnatural and deflected capital and initiative from purposes more in line with the country's structure, thus giving rise to monopolistic profits and encouraging dangerous forms of parasitic dependence on the state. Only a few thinkers, such as Fortunato, De Viti, Salvemini and their closest collaborators, realized that protectionism also operated against that half of Italy which was inevitably cut off from industrialization and more or less abandoned to its own devices.

The experience inherent in the latest political developments fully justified their fears. Southern agriculture had never been given a firm basis on which to formulate its long-term plans. In particular, it had suffered from the consequences of the customs battle with France which had been caused by the occupation of Tunis. The consequence of that quarrel was that Southern products, and especially wine, which at that time formed the main item in its exports to France, were refused admission. On top of this, there had come the agricultural crisis which, with the long spell of low prices, had sapped the vitality of the countryside and had driven crowds of farm workers and small farmers ruined by the crisis to seek a less precarious existence across the Atlantic. Thus, the question of emigration was also brought into the debate on the South. The big Southern landowners were opposed to the exodus which restricted the supply of labour, and there was no lack of experts such as Villari who regarded emigration as an evil and as impoverishing the

nation. But anyone reflecting on the state of the countryside could not but admit that, in the years when the crisis was at its worst, emigration had offered the only possible outlet and thus avoided the most appalling poverty. From a general point of view too, the positive repercussions of this tremendous operation on the life of the South were clear for all to see.

It was from this very agricultural depression that Italy received the incentive to raise its customs barriers, and it was in vain that the free-traders fought against these measures. In vain Fortunato and De Viti urged the members of parliament from the South not to commit another error by voting for tariffs on wheat, after having supported all the steps to assist the cotton, steel and sugar manufacturers. The rise in the price of bread was the inevitable consequence of this tariff; it raised wages, and hence the price of manufacturers for which the South was dependent on the North. Moreover, the tariff provided the big landowners of the South with an uncovenanted income, but was not the slightest help to the small farmers who either produced just enough wheat for their own consumption or else purchased it from others.

The last twenty years of the 19th century were an extremely difficult time for Italy. Yet, despite contrasts and hesitations and a number of painful setbacks, the country continued to advance along the path which it had chosen. It slowly changed, abandoning the purely rural status to which the history of recent centuries seemed to have condemned it. The difference between the "two Italies", which was not too visible in 1860, leapt to the eye half a century later when the North was being transformed and was progressing rapidly, while the South appeared to stand still and to be exhausting its energies in its perpetual crisis of men and enterprise, of economy and social structure. In the "industrial triangle", at the apex of which three bustling cities were expanding, a civilization was beginning to take shape which had remodelled its features and ambitions. The old primacy of Milan in commerce was extended to industry and, towards the end of the century, it also took the lead in finance. Italians and foreigners made a distinction between the political capital of the country and the "economic capital" which for many of them was also the "moral capital" of the nation.

After the writings of Fortunato, it was not possible to believe in the natural riches of the mainland South. But works compiled during these years by Coppola, Bruccoleri, Ziino, Cammareri Scurti,

gave a description of Sicily and explained its terrible sufferings (13). The *Inchiesta parlamentare sulle condizioni dei contadini nelle provincie meridionali e nella Sicilia* provided further official recognition of a situation which had already been incisively depicted by a literature of a social if not explicitly socialist inspiration. A number of the volumes of the *Inchiesta* bore names which are worth remembering. Nitti and Azimonti were responsible for the Basilicata, Lorenzoni for Sicily, and Jarach for the Abruzzi and Molise.

The Southern question could no longer be ignored. In the summer of 1902, the old Prime Minister, Zanardelli, made a trip through the Basilicata, as if to set the stamp of his approval on the solemn pledge given by the Government to include the South in its programme. Less than two years later, the cycle of exceptional measures in favour of one or other of the particularly needy regions was inaugurated. In a short time, a special law was passed for the Basilicata, one for the city of Naples, one for Calabria, and lastly one for the Southern provinces in general, including Sicily and Sardinia. The special laws should have tackled the very arduous tasks of improving the milieu, undertaking reforestation, effecting flood control, curbing landslides and improving communications, combating malaria and so on. Since, however, a ridiculously small amount of money was appropriated for a very large range of needs, the only effect of the special laws was to push through a few fragmentary projects which were swamped in the bottomless pit of the South without leaving a trace. When the law for the Basilicata came before the Chamber of Deputies, Fortunato voted against it, and expressed the view that this was not the way to defend the interests of the South. What was needed was a new approach, a new overall policy. And another deputy from the Basilicata, the Socialist Ciccotti, showed in a lucid speech how inadequate, ill-conceived and deceptive this special legislation was bound to be (14).

De Viti de Marco also came out against the special laws. These were, he wrote, a mistake and a hoax. When a country has raised loud cries to heaven, we have run to its help and taken a few steps with the aim of isolating and reducing to silence the malcontents.

(13) COPPOLA, *I latifondi in Sicilia*, Palermo, 1895; N. ZIINO, *Latifondo e latifondismo*, Palermo, 1911; G. BRUCCOLERI, *La Sicilia di oggi*, Rome, 1913. On the value of the agriculture of the mainland South, cf. E. AZIMONTI, *Il Mezzogiorno agrario qual'è*, Bari, 1919.

(14) E. CICCOTTI, "I provvedimenti governativi e la Basilicata", in *Sulla questione meridionale*, Milan, 1904, pp. 327-345.

Then we go on quietly exploiting the whole region. "The special laws have the same political function in the South as the social laws have for the proletariat. Both sets of laws have given a province or a group particular benefits in order to prevent or shelve reforms in the interests of the whole of the South and the whole of the proletariat. And this is why the expedients of the special law must be opposed. We must fight against the North which offers them, and against the South which has neither the education nor the political experience to refuse them" (15). But this doctrinaire intransigence was too daring for the Southern members of parliament whose traditional conformism was intensified by imperious electoral preoccupations.

The political parties found it difficult to form a clear conception of the political struggle in the South. Even the Socialists wavered continuously between a theoretical collectivism and a tactical indulgence towards the individualistic pressure of the peasant masses. The battle for the land continued to be the main theme of Southern life. A class of small peasant landowners had grown up in the areas where agriculture had been most successful. Thanks to the untiring labours of individual farmers, often assisted by relatives who had emigrated to America, this new class had done wonders with market gardens, olive groves and vineyards which it had cultivated with great devotion. But it was constantly exposed to the danger of economic obliteration. Very many peasants, however, still had to work as farm hands, especially in the inland areas which it was more difficult to lay out as farms, and they too cherished the old dream of achieving independence, and were eagerly on the look-out for any means likely to enable them to own their land, whether it was only by purchase or by violent occupation, the legal distribution of the vast feudal estates or the carving up of the last state lands.

Moreover, it was fairly widely held that the poverty of the South was to be attributed in no small measure to the latifundia régime and to the existence of large, indeed very large private estates which had no interest in exploiting their land to the full. Only the transfer of the land to a class of peasant owners, rich in energy and determination, could, according to this theory, increase productivity

(15) A. DE VITI DE MARCO, "Per un programma d'azione democratica", in *Un trentennio di lotte politiche (1894-1922)*, p. 339.

in the interest both of the individuals and of the community as a whole.

The myth of small peasant property became an oratorical battle-cry, and, by altering the terms of the question, led people to overlook a long series of happenings which was unfortunately full of disappointments and failures. We need only recall the great law dispossessing the feudal lords which, in 1806, had divided up over a third of the feudal domains among 230,000 peasants, and subsequently the expropriation of church lands which, after 1861, had not been any more successful in creating a durable group of small peasant owners. The story of the Italian Parliament abounds in proposals for laws which were intended to penalize the owners of uncultivated land, and threatened absentee landlords with expropriation, promised help and facilities to those undertaking the distribution and settlement of such land. But the effect of all these measures was little or nil. In the inland Southern areas, the existing system of land tenure had hardly been affected by these onslaughts, and the large extensive estates, after every attempt to reduce their extent, had made a come-back and even strengthened their position. The small peasant farms which had been created, sometimes at the cost of immense personal sacrifices, on the edge of the latifundia, had had a hard job to survive, and in not a few cases they had had to throw in the sponge at the first setback caused by natural or economic factors — a bad crop, a slump in prices, an unbearable burden of indebtedness. The truth was that the fragmentation of the land was not feasible in these environmental conditions, and could only be achieved at the cost of an overall decrease in production. Especially in the case of Sicily, outstanding experts such as Cuboni, Valenti and Lorenzoni agreed that in most cases the latifundia was the best solution for the conditions existing at the time, that is, for a practically dry agriculture, with no communications and drinking water, and no accommodation in the countryside (16). And even on this issue a socialist writer, Cammareri Scurti, showed himself both realistic and coherent, thus running counter to the attitude adopted in practice by his party. In 1908, Scurti, having observed the inanity of any attempt to create small peasant farms or to reform land tenure, suggested the socialization of the latifundia as the only pos-

(16) On the problem of the latifundia, cf. the comprehensive review by R. CIASCA, *Il problema della terra*, Milan, 1921.

sible way out. The splitting up of the latifundia, he asserted, "which has always been urged in vain from the Gracchi to Crispi, is impracticable where physical condition and interests are opposed to it. And to this Utopia we oppose not some minor argument but the whole weight of this study. The Sicilian latifundia should not be split up but should be socialized in its entirety... The Socialists should resist with might and main any plan to divide up that land, and should on the contrary support the collective assignment thereof to large associations with whom it could organize not the division of the property but the use of the land... (17).

The clash which was becoming increasingly serious and obvious between North and South now involved opinions which went well beyond a simple comparison of economic indications. It was no longer a question of only a different level of development or of the social immaturity of the South which had so impressed Franchetti and Sonnino, but against which they had believed in the efficacy of slow but sure remedies — roads, schools, good administration, the example of a higher code of behaviour. What was now clear was a difference of social structure which, after half a century so lacking in results as regards territorial integration, induced not a few observers to wonder whether the gap could ever be bridged, and whether it was not necessary to resign themselves to the view that the South was resistant to all forms of modern civilization.

The meaning of this drama is visible in the case of Fortunato, whose profound Southern sadness was heightened by his first-hand knowledge of his own part of the country and by his realization, amounting almost to an obsession, how difficult it was to reverse a country's destiny. But anyone studying the development of political life in the South could not help observing the profound weaknesses in the human factor which was expected to respond to the stimuli of freedom and democracy.

Any examination of the efficiency of the state institutions, and of the reforms for which they called, always seemed to come back to the old discussion on centralization against decentralization, the uniformization of the state against the federalist system, which was a burning issue at the time of unification when it was a question of giving the country a constitutional regime and which was still

(17) S. CAMMARERI SCURTÌ, "Patti agrari e camorra nel latifondo siciliano", in *Critica sociale*, 1908, p. 138.

the subject of heated argument half a century later. Centralists and federalists still fought it out with all sorts of arguments, old and new. In the South itself there were many who were aware of the low level of political life and who looked to the central authority to safeguard the position by exercising strict control over local authorities. The grant of greater administrative powers and a larger degree of independence to these authorities, far from operating in favour of liberty, would, these writers asserted, lead to even worse abuses and exploitation of the weak by the strong. The state alone was in a position to ensure impartiality and justice to which the local administration tended to be averse.

As early as 1882, this view was put forward by a representative of the "historical Right", the Neapolitan Pasquale Turiello, who had written a book called *Governo e governati* (18). In it he came out in favour of an authoritarian government capable of reviving the country's respect for the state and the law which became fainter and fainter as it filtered down from the North to the South, being lost "in the increasingly individualistic looseness of the latter region".

A number of Turiello's conclusions on the Southern character were later repeated by Niceforo, Sergi, Lombroso and other writers who, under the influence of the prevailing positivism, tended to regard the problem of the South in terms of scientific determinism, and in substance reduced it to a simple question of anthropology. Sergi had put forward the concept of the decadence of the Southern race, stemming directly from the historical decadence of the Mediterranean world. Niceforo, in his turn, after having patiently measured somatic indices and systematically studied the social statistics (population, education, crime and so on) had come to the conclusion that there were two Italian races. One of these was close to the type of the Northern races and still capable of development. The other one was of Mediterranean stock and was condemned to an inferiority from which there was no escape. "We may say even at this point", he wrote, "that, if the psychology of the dark Mediterranean peoples was able to effect progress and create civilization in ancient despotic times, the present age of liberty and democracy finds this psychology much less suited to progress, since the environment has now radically changed. At the present time, the struggle

(18) Published at Bologna in 1882 in 2 volumes.

will be won by those who have spontaneous organizational ability, and this quality is rarely met with among the dark Mediterranean peoples" (19).

Reasonings on these lines were at that time in vogue, as is evident from the conclusions of a survey carried out by Antonio Renda in the *Pensiero contemporaneo* of Catanzaro on the causes of the decadence of the South, and on means of eliminating them. Many of the people questioned, no matter whether from the North or the South, showed a fatalistic acceptance of the inferiority of the Southerner to the Northerner and, when faced with evils as serious as the backwardness of the South, they were unable to propose remedies likely to be at all effective (20). Naturally, some of those interrogated, firmly refused to be confined within the bounds of this restrictive theory. Foremost among them was Salvemini who, in his reply to Renda, dialectically turned around the argument which attributed the responsibility for the region's decline to the race. "Race", he said, "is formed by history and is the effect thereof, not the cause. And it is transformed in history. Only cowards and superficial thinkers can explain the history of a country in racial terms".

A small group of democratic or Mazzinian writers, such as Napoleone Colajanni and Arcangelo Ghisleri, took a different line. They were almost all followers of Giuseppe Ferrari and Carlo Cattaneo, and militated in the Republican party. They did not deny that the legacy of history weighed heavily on the South, but they levelled their main criticisms against the political system imposed in 1861. This, they said, far from helping the country to advance towards a more liberal way of life, had underlined the oppressive aspects of the regime. For these thinkers, the way to revive the South must pass through democracy, and democracy meant Republican liberty, federalism and the end of the centralist tyranny.

In 1878, Alberto Mario had asserted that the moment should come when Italy would realize that "no great issue, whether economic, political or administrative, can be solved by the same law if applied to different kinds of people..." (21). Twenty-five years after,

Ghisleri demanded that, once and for all, the Southern question should be raised "above the level of envy and mutual accusation which only breed hatred and argument, a morass in which the men of the monarchical system tend to become bogged down, faithful, as they are, to the vicious maxim of "divide and rule". For us, it is not a question of giving or receiving as between South and North, but of equal rights for all in the face of a rapacious form of rule which seeks to corrupt, and which is baneful for, everyone. We are not raising the grievances of envy but the banner of justice. There are no inferior or superior races, but peoples who are equally capable of freedom, social improvement and progress, peoples whom a violent and hypocritical regime misgoverns, corrupts and oppresses in equal measure" (22).

Colajanni, too, made fun of what he shrewdly termed Niceforo's "romance of anthropology" and the conclusions of the school "which calls itself positivist and is only metaphysical". Conscious of the infinite shortcomings of his native South, Colajanni indicted the whole political class. The governments who had followed each other in power from Italian unification on had made use of the South for their own purposes, but had, in the process, supported the worst local forces at the expense of all sound principles of social development (23). Of course, an economic substratum conditioned life in these regions and provided the explanation of a number of the more impulsive aspects of its behaviour. Colajanni's book on the peasant risings in Sicily in 1893, in fact, related these bloody events to the special conditions prevailing in the island — the arbitrary acts of the landowners, the ruthless avidity of the authorities and the unspeakable poverty of the populace. The struggle against the vestiges of feudalism which kept the peasants in a state of slavish subjection should therefore go hand in hand with the struggle against the centralized state which abandoned the country to a bureaucracy supinely yoked to the interests of Northern economic circles (24).

Gaetano Salvemini took as his starting point premises which were in part similar to those of Ghisleri and Colajanni, but he

(19) A. NICEFORO, *Italiani del Nord ed italiani del Sud*, Torino, 1898, p. 138. By the same author cf. also *L'Italia barbara contemporanea*, Milan, 1898.

(20) A. RENDA, *La questione meridionale* (replies to the survey), Palermo, 1960.

(21) In *Rivista repubblicana*, 22 November 1878.

(22) A. GHISLERI, *La questione meridionale nella soluzione del problema italiano*, 3rd edition, Rome, 1944, p. 76.

(23) N. COLAJANNI, *Settecentrali e meridionali d'Italia*, Milan, 1898.

(24) N. COLAJANNI, *In Sicilia*, Rome, 1894.

mediately expanded them within a broader and more complex framework. Born in 1873 at Molfetta, a large peasant city in Apulia, he studied under Pasquale Villari at Florence, and later succeeded him in his chair at the university. Salvemini joined the Socialist Party at a tender age. His spiritual father was Carlo Cattaneo, of whose work he was a devoted student. He took from Cattaneo his distrust of the abstract formulas of the political parties and a concrete approach to clearly demarcated and specific problems of economics and politics. Hence, an attitude of rooted distaste for the academic and rhetorical tone which was still so widespread in the South.

He was a severe critic of the Southern petty bourgeoisie which he castigated in an essay that is rightly famous (25). As against this, he had the greatest faith in the peasants of his province — the “cafoni” who, though generally despised, were sober, untiring at work, eager for justice and deserving of a better fate. In this class, constantly deceived and exploited, he saw the physical and moral energy essential for the rebirth of the South. It was this conviction which induced him at an early stage to fight for the grant of universal suffrage. This would have broken the small circle of political power and given the peasants a valuable weapon which they would undoubtedly have learned to use and appreciate as time went by.

Salvemini simultaneously carried on a polemical battle against the ruling class which was reducing the South to a kind of political colony or to a reservoir of members of parliament, elected as a result of government manipulations, supinely obedient to the Cabinet and almost always forgetful of the real interests of their country. On every decisive occasion, the anti-popular or reactionary policy of the Government had been approved in Parliament by a compact phalanx of Southern votes. In a famous pamphlet (“Il Ministro della malavita”), he painted a picture of Giovanni Giolitti, the politician, who, though respecting democratic forms in the North, did not hesitate, in the South, to use the most unscrupulous means in order to have his own men elected. In the laborious battle for the raising of the moral level of Southern political life against

the phenomena of the degeneration of Parliament, which was at that time given the name of “trasformismo”, Salvemini found himself side by side with De Viti de Marco and Giustino Fortunato, to whose great integrity throughout his whole existence he paid a tribute of affectionate devotion.

In common with Fortunato and the radicals, the socialist Salvemini had an aversion for the protectionist policy which not only sacrificed the interests of the agricultural South but also created unnatural discriminations between the working class minority enjoying the privileges accorded to protected industries, and the other, more numerous body of workers who remained unprotected. Salvemini was adamant on these principles, and in the end found himself completely isolated in the Socialist Party. In 1911, he decided to leave it in order to be completely independent and to found his own paper — *L'Unità* — which, apart from certain interruptions caused by the war, came out from December 1911 to the end of 1920.

The *Unità* occupies an important place in the history of the Southern question not only because the South was frequently discussed in its columns and indeed often placed right in the forefront, but because this special interest reflected the general approach of the paper. This policy was to deal with Italian problems “in a spirit free from all doctrinaire opinions or sectarian prejudices, and only from the point of view of the long-term wellbeing of the whole country”.

The paper's title itself indicated that the Southern question, which was now regarded as the central issue and touchstone of national policy, had to be attacked as an aspect of general policy by an alliance between the most advanced part of the country and the poorest sections. Thanks to this broad approach, the *Unità* was able to secure the collaboration of democratic writers of different intellectual backgrounds who were all equally tired of “trasformismo” in politics and equally anxious to see Italy's problems solved on an equitable basis. These men ranged from De Viti de Marco to Luigi Einaudi, from Fortunato to Silva, from Maranelli to Azimonti and Mondolfo. The discussion of customs tariffs was one of the staple topics of the paper which launched a specific and fully documented accusation against the main interests profiting from protectionism — “the steel kings”, “the sugar barons” and the “cotton buccaneers”. But Salvemini and his

(25) G. SALVEMINI, *La piccola borghesia intellettuale nel Mezzogiorno d'Italia*, issue of *La Voce*, Florence, 16 May 1911; republished in *Scritti sulla questione meridionale*, Turin, 1955, pp. 412-426.

collaborators scrutinized all other important aspects of Italian life, — education and taxation, colonial and foreign policy. In the *Unità*, a number of young men made their début, young men whose names were to be linked to the most courageous episodes of resistance to Fascism: Piero Gobetti, Ernesto Rossi, and Piero Calamandrei (26).

In the issues of the *Unità* it is possible to follow the evolution of thinking on the Southern problem from the birth of the paper to the years immediately after the First World War. To start with, the issue was one almost of fiscal techniques, and seemed to be destined to exhaust itself in the demand for charitable measures and parliamentary favours accorded by the richer regions to the poorer ones. By the end of the period in question, the problem had become one of general policy, and entailed a judgment on the concept of the state, its structure and its aims.

No doubt Colajanni and De Viti de Marco, Fortunato and Salvemini had been impelled by a deeply felt and painful awareness of the wretchedness of the South, and from the comparison between it and the relatively far more satisfactory conditions in the North, they had been driven to make what was at the same time an appeal and a protest. They had set their faces against the temptation offered by small immediate advantages and facile ideological compromises, and had fought their hard fight amidst the indifference of the majority and the lack of understanding of Parliament and the political parties. They were firmly convinced that what was needed was not so much special favours as the benefits for the South of a sound general policy. The rest might come one day, but in the meantime the Southern question tended to be more and more identified with the national question, and tended to find a solution only to the extent to which the whole of Italy's pressing economic and political problems were tackled in a spirit of liberty and justice. Hence a warning which is still valid, even if, now that circumstances have changed, the terms of problem have to some extent been altered.

About 1920, official demagogy still met with a certain response, and not a few believed that it was sufficient, to placate the South,

(26) From *Unità* material there have now been compiled two large anthologies, one by B. Finocchiaro, Pozza, Venice, 1958, and the other by F. Golzio and A. Guerra, Einaudi, Turin, 1962.

to promise some new public works — a bridge, a stretch of road, or even the construction of a high school or a law court. But in reality a considerable step forward had been taken because of a clearer realization of the problem and of its implications. The teachings of the great writers on the South were beginning to bear fruit and were leading to a more sophisticated and modern type of thinking which vigorously underlined the political nature of the question and at the same time strove to define the forces which, sooner or later, would extend to all the more mature section of the country and would cut this Gordian knot.

At the heart of the battle for the South, conceived of mainly as a political struggle, there still lay the demand for constitutional reform. For some, what was called for was administrative decentralization designed to reinvigorate the forces of local democracy, while for others it was essential to go further, free the South from the leading strings of the North, and reject any tendency on the part of that "foreign power" to intervene, since the only concern of these outside influences, Salvemini affirmed, was to defend the petty bourgeoisie, with its parasitic tendencies and its constant search for jobs, against the discontent of the peasants. Through the exercise of local power, the Southern plebs would regain the feeling for and dignity of political duty, and would give up their inclination to indulge in fierce and pointless risings in order to vent their repressed anger at their sufferings.

One man in particular realized the potential value of the development of democracy in public life for the solution of the Southern problem. He was Guido Dorso, a writer from Avellino who, if his ideas did not spread throughout the country, since he was forced by Fascism to carry out his work in silence, exercised a certain influence on the generation of Southern thinkers who grew up between the two wars.

In his research on the social history of the South, Dorso reviews the events which led up to the regrettable "royal conquest", that is, the installation of the bureaucratic and centralized state. The dominating topic in his writings is the re-awakening of the political conscience of the South, a re-awakening which is possible, provided leaders emerge who can assume overall responsibility and canalize the vigorous but immature energies in which the country is so rich. If the Mezzogiorno is to revive, says Dorso, it needs an élite, even

a small one, which knows where it is going and is unswerving in the exercise of its critical function and in its moral standards (27).

Antonio Gramsci also devoted a short essay to the problem of the South. Gramsci was a Sardinian and a Communist whom Fascism kept in prison for many years, almost until the day he died (in 1937). He maintained that the Northern bourgeoisie had subjugated Southern Italy and reduced it to the level of an exploited colony. It was therefore necessary to forge an alliance between the Northern workers and the Southern peasant masses in order to create the new force which would be capable of overthrowing the bourgeois state, and at the same time emancipating the Southern proletariat from the slavery of industrial capitalism and the Southern peasants from that of landed capitalism. With this approach, Gramsci and his friends of the Turin *Ordine nuovo* in a way adopted the thesis of De Viti de Marco and Salvemini, but they gave it an extremely political twist and felt that they had thus raised the Southern question from a vague and intellectualistic level to one at which the revolutionary worker of Turin became the main protagonist, as Gramsci observed, instead of writers, such as Fortunato, Azimonti and Salvemini — old reformists who were regarded as conservatives, or at most as impotent prophets (28).

Antonio Gramsci is now considered as the theorist and inspirer of Italian Communism, and his interpretation of the Southern problem, even if obviously doctrinaire and half-baked, reappears from time to time in the left-wing reviews when this old question is discussed.

He was writing between the two wars, at a time when an armed outbreak was in the offing, and with it the fall of Fascism which was expected to offer Italy a historic opportunity for revolution. In reality, as we all know, war came and Fascism went, but the revolutionary opening disappeared into thin air.

In the post-war period, the Southern question too has followed a new path which neither Fortunato nor Gramsci could have foreseen. What for so many years had been a specifically Italian problem now formed merely a part of a much vaster complex of problems which closely affected a large number of countries, and

(27) G. DORSO, *La rivoluzione meridionale*, new edition, Turin, 1945.

(28) A. GRAMSCI, "Note sulla questione meridionale", in *Stato operaio*, 1930.

the theory and practical solution of which is being worked out by an extensive group of sociologists, experts and economists.

In the last fifteen years, the theory of action in the under-developed countries has made great progress and has even ended up by forming a separate sector which is certainly not one of the least important of modern social science. The old Southern question has been hitched on to these studies, and, conversely, has infused its own experience into this wider issue, while profiting from high level scientific thinking.

Students of Italy's present efforts to break the vicious circle of poverty and need realize that new technical tools and impressive financial resources are being employed which would have been unthinkable thirty years ago.

But the problem of the Italian South is in some ways parallel to that of other countries which have recently appeared on the political scene although they have a different economic and social structure and have much less in the way of historical traditions than Italy. The Southern question has its roots in the centuries-old evolution of the country, and what most impresses students of the South at the present time is the constant pull of firmly entrenched local factors in a vast experiment of social revival and transformation which calls for the application of modern views and techniques.

The past is still very much alive in this ancient and tormented land, and it is for that reason that a knowledge of the historical antecedents of the Southern question is a precondition of a fuller understanding of the uncertain prospects that lie ahead.

Como.

B. CAZZI

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

The works of Villari, Sonnino, Franchetti, Nitti, De Viti de Marco, Salvemini, Fortunato and the other writers quoted *passim* in this article provide an exhaustive picture of the classical literature on the Southern question. To these writings we may add a few which are not mentioned.

A comprehensive analytical and critical historical study has been made by G. ARIAS, *La questione meridionale*, 2 vols., Bologna, 1921. The treatment of emigration is particularly detailed.

More recently the weighty work of F. VÖCHTING, *Die italienische Suedfrage*, Berlin, 1951, has been made available by the same editor in Italian with

the title *La questione meridionale*, Naples, 1955. Vöchting has particularly rich chapters on Southern agriculture, and gives a full bibliography.

For the geography of the South see the essays of C. MARANELLI, which have been collected in *Considerazioni geografiche sulla questione meridionale*, Bari, 1947.

The complete works of F. S. Nitti and G. Salvemini are being edited by Laterza in Bari and Feltrinelli in Milan respectively. These editions will make available the extensive work of these two writers on the question. In the case of Fortunato, a small but admirable anthology has been prepared by M. Rossi-Doria — *Giustino Fortunato, antologia dei suoi scritti*, Bari, 1948.

Reference should also be made to ROSSI-DORIA's, *Riforma agraria e azione meridionalista*, Bologna, 1948, and, as an introduction to the more recent aspects of the question, to *Dieci anni di politica agraria nel Mezzogiorno*, Bari, 1958.

There are three anthologies which make available a number of well-known texts and others which are not so familiar: S. F. ROMANO, *Storia della questione meridionale*, Palermo, 1945. (Despite its title, this is really an anthology with an introduction outlining the history of the question); R. VILLARI, *Il Sud nella storia d'Italia*, Bari, 1961; and B. CAZZI, *Nuova antologia della questione meridionale*, Milan, 1962. (This is the third and completely recast edition of a work which first appeared in 1950).

Lastly, there are reviews which assign an important and indeed leading place to the problem of the South. The most important of these is *Nord e Sud*, published in Naples under the direction of F. Compagna.