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0521527104 - Violence and Great Estates in the South of Italy: Apulia, 1900-1922

Frank M. Snowden

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VIOLENCE AND GREAT ESTATES IN THE SOUTH OF ITALY

Apulia, 1900–1922

Until Italian unification, vast areas of Apulia were an uninhabited sheep walk. In the late nineteenth century this frontier area was settled and agro-business established. In the quasi-colonial context of the South of Italy, the relations between landowners and farm workers were characterized by extreme forms of oppression and brutality.

This book is a study of the world the landlords made and of the harsh structures of profit, tenure, and climate they faced. It is also a powerful investigation of the appallingly grim conditions in the teeming agricultural centres of the region and a vivid history of the struggle by the farm workers to win the ordinary decencies of life – clothes, clean water, and bread. In the process, the labourers established one of the most potent revolutionary movements in modern Italian history. Since this movement was anarcho-syndicalist in orientation, the work seeks to explain the social bases of syndicalism in the period between the first general strikes in 1901 and the restoration of the landlords' power by fascist terror in 1922.

The book also confronts broader issues – the nature of the liberal state in Italy, the stunted development of the South, the weakness of the Catholic Church in the area, the working of latifundism as a labour repressive system of production, and the nature of fascism in general and in Apulia in particular.

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*To the memory of my
friend Leo Leva*

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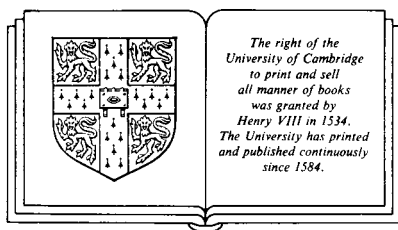
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FRANK M. SNOWDEN

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University of London*



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PREFACE

The research for this book was made possible by the help of many people, and I am glad to have this opportunity to thank them. Dr De Lucia of the Soprintendenza Archivistica of Apulia was an invaluable source of information concerning the archives in the region. Franco De Felice and Luigi Massella also helped me to find source material. The staff of the Archivi di Stato at Bari and Foggia, and of the Archivio Comunale at Gravina, made every effort to assist me in locating documents. I am also grateful to Count Pavoncelli for his permission to consult the papers in the private Pavoncelli archive at Cerignola and for his generous hospitality. Family papers are all too rarely made available to scholars in Italy, and I have been very fortunate in being granted access to this extensive and valuable source.

Intellectual and moral support were also forthcoming from friends and colleagues. My thanks are extended especially to the following colleagues: Penelope Corfield, who read an early draft of the work and provided helpful suggestions; Francis Robinson and G.N. Sanderson, who gave enthusiasm and encouragement; and Jonathan Steinberg, at whose seminar the idea for this work began. The book was written with the constant interest and loving support of my wife, Smitty.

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GLOSSARY OF ITALIAN TERMS

<i>annarolo</i>	A worker hired on a yearly basis by an estate.
<i>carabinieri</i>	Military police responsible for law and order.
<i>curatolo</i>	A hired estate manager.
<i>demani</i>	Common lands held in collective ownership.
<i>fascio</i>	A local branch of the fascist movement.
<i>giornatario</i>	Day labourer in agriculture.
<i>latifondista</i>	Proprietor of a great estate.
<i>marina</i>	The coastal zones of the region.
<i>massaro</i>	The commercial farmer leasing a large estate.
<i>masseria</i>	A farm. The term refers to the large units of cultivation into which a great estate is subdivided.
<i>mazziere</i>	Hired strike-breaker and hit man.
<i>mezzadria</i>	Sharecropping.
<i>Mezzogiorno</i>	The South of Italy.
<i>opere pie</i>	Catholic beneficent associations.
<i>tratturo</i>	A sheep highway across the Tavoliere.
<i>ufficio di collocamento</i>	Labour exchange and hiring hall.
<i>usi civici</i>	Collective rights of usage such as pasturage, tillage, fishing and gleaning.
<i>versura</i>	Neapolitan unit of measure roughly equal to 1.25 hectares.