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Harry Hearder
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Italy: A Short History is a concise but comprehensive account of Italian history from the Ice Age to the present day. It is intended for both students of Italian history and culture and the general reader, whether tourist, businessperson or traveller, with an interest in Italian affairs. Harry Hearder places the main political developments in Italian history in their economic and social context and shows how these are related to the great moments of artistic and cultural endeavour. Amongst key events, he analyses the growth and decline of the Roman Empire, the remarkable cultural achievements of the Renaissance, Italian unification and the contradictions of the fascist dictatorship of Mussolini. Jonathan Morris brings the work up to the present day with an authoritative but colourful history of the corruption scandals that brought down the post-war Italian political system in the 1990s and the new political forces that have emerged in its place.

The late Harry Hearder was Professor Emeritus at the University of Wales. His many publications on European and Italian history include *Europe in the Nineteenth Century* (Longman, second edition, 1988) and *Italy in the Age of the Risorgimento* (Longman, 1983).

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ITALY
A SHORT HISTORY



HARRY HEARDER
Professor Emeritus, University of Wales



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Preface

In 1963 the Cambridge University Press published a book entitled *A Short History of Italy*, edited by Dr D. P. Waley and myself. We featured as ‘editors’, because the book had been originally written, though not published, by C. M. Ady and A. J. Whyte, during the Second World War. Dr Waley and I made the changes which seemed to us to have become necessary with the passing of time. The book was appreciatively received – especially by departments of Italian – and has been reprinted several times. The present book is in no sense a revision of *A Short History of Italy*. The only thing it has in common with the earlier book is that it is of roughly the same length and format. The Cambridge University Press asked me to write what can perhaps be best described as an ‘heir’ to *A Short History of Italy*, but it was to be the work of one author instead of the several who had contributed to the earlier publication, and it was to be an entirely new book.

For one person to write a history as long and rich as Italy’s has clearly been a daunting proposition, even if the task has been an immensely enjoyable one. The selection of material, argument and narrative is bound to have been an idiosyncratic one, and I cannot hold anyone else responsible for it. I would like, however, very warmly to thank Professor John Percival for reading Chapter 1, Sections 3 and 4, and Professor Daniel Waley for reading Chapter 3, Sections 2, 3 and 4, and for their invaluable corrections and suggestions. Dr Peter Edbury, Mr

Preface

Tony Glazer and Professor Peter Walcot also gave me extremely useful hints on books to read to fill some of the gaps in my knowledge and understanding. Dr Rosemary Morris, a Cambridge University Press copy editor, gave invaluable suggestions for improvements in style and presentation.

If my interpretation is idiosyncratic in some respects, it is traditional in others. I realize, for example, that I have not given a great deal of space to the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and that several scholars who have recently declared the Baroque and Spanish periods neglected would charge me with prolonging a traditional imbalance. I respect their opinions, but do not share them. It seems to me that Italy played a more important role in the political, economic and cultural history of the world under the Roman Republic and Empire, and during the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance, than she was to do in the subsequent two centuries. Traditional interpretations are not always mistaken.

My first view of Italy was of the Bay of Naples in March 1944, on a glorious sunny day, which gave no warning of the world of devastation and hunger which lay beyond the coastline. For a year from the May offensive at Cassino until the end of the war I was myself a humble, but I hope reliable, primary source for Italian history: the reader may detect one or two statements based only on my memory. Needless to say, I would not trust my own memory if there were any documentary evidence which contradicted it. The German army corps in Italy surrendered on my twenty-first birthday – a kind thought, for which I was very grateful.

I have tried to give a positive view of Italian history. British historians often seem to write of Italy in a slightly condescending, patronizing – if not positively disparaging – tone, and in so doing merely betray their own insularity. To all my Italian friends over the years – far too many to list – I owe an immense debt, and the biggest debt of all I owe to the one I married. The book is dedicated to our daughter, whose love of Italy is as great as my own.

November, 1989

H.H.