

A CONCISE HISTORY OF ITALY

SECOND EDITION

Since its formation in 1861, Italy has struggled to develop an effective political system and a secure sense of national identity. This new edition of Christopher Duggan's acclaimed introduction charts the country's history from the fall of the Roman Empire in the West to the present day and surveys the difficulties Italy has faced during the last two centuries in forging a nation state. Duggan successfully weaves together political, economic, social and cultural history, and stresses the alternation between materialist and idealist programmes for forging a nation state. This second edition has been thoroughly revised and updated to offer increased coverage of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Italy, as well as a new section devoted to Italy in the twenty-first century. With a new, extensive bibliographical essay and a detailed chronology, this is the ideal resource for those seeking an authoritative and comprehensive introduction to Italian history.

CHRISTOPHER DUGGAN is Professor of Modern Italian History at the University of Reading. He has written extensively on many aspects of nineteenth and twentieth century Italy. His books include *Fascism and the Mafia* (Yale University Press, 1989), *Francesco Crispi: From Nation to Nationalism* (Oxford University Press, 2002), *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy since 1796* (Allen Lane, 2007), and *Fascist Voices: An Intimate History of Mussolini's Italy* (Bodley Head, 2012). All his books have been translated into Italian. He is a Commendatore of the Ordine della Stella della Solidarietà Italiana, a title conferred by the President of Italy.

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Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-76039-3 – A Concise History of Italy
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SECOND EDITION

CHRISTOPHER DUGGAN



CAMBRIDGE
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University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8RU, United Kingdom

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It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

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Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521747431

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First published 2014

7th printing 2018

Printed in the United Kingdom by Clays, St Ives plc

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Duggan, Christopher.

A concise history of Italy / Christopher Duggan. – Second edition.

pages cm. – (Cambridge concise histories)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-76039-3 (alk. paper) – ISBN 978-0-521-74743-1

(pbk. : alk. paper) 1. Italy – History. I. Title.

DG467.D84 2014

945–dc23

2013039540

ISBN 978-0-521-76039-3 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-74743-1 Paperback

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PREFACE

A history of Italy on this scale can make no claims to originality or to comprehensiveness. My intention has been to provide a succinct, and hopefully clear, survey of some of the principal developments in the peninsula since the time of the Romans. I lean heavily on the work of others, above all in the early chapters and towards the end: I hope the authors concerned will exercise forbearance, and accept, collectively, my warm thanks. Perhaps inevitably, given limitations on space, my focus is primarily on political issues (in the event, though, rather more than originally intended). However, I have tried to weave in, at certain points, discussion of economic, social, and cultural matters; and in the introduction I have looked briefly at how Italy's location in Europe, its soil, climate, mineral resources, and physical geography have influenced its history.

The main problem with a work such as this is to find a thematic thread. In the case of Italy this is particularly difficult: the country has only been in existence since 1861, and strictly speaking 'its' history starts then, not before. Prior to that date the peninsula was a patchwork of states, each with its own history and traditions. One solution occasionally adopted is to abandon political narrative and instead to consider 'Italy' as essentially a 'geographical expression', a unit of territory whose history can be given coherence by focusing on broad socio-economic and cultural themes. This is not altogether

satisfactory, however, since the unit of territory is still the national-political one, and for the most part bears little obvious or natural relationship to any such themes.

In so far as a single thematic thread exists in this book, it is that of the problem of 'nation building'. Italy came into being in 1859–60 as much by accident as by design. Only a small minority of people before 1860 seriously believed that Italy was a nation, and that it should form a unitary state; and even they had to admit that there was little, on the face of it, to justify their belief: neither history nor language, for example, really supported their case. The result was that after unity was achieved, Italy's rulers faced the difficult task of creating a sense of collective identity, and binding the peninsula's population to the new national institutions. They alternated between 'materialist' and 'idealist' solutions, but on the whole failed to come up with a satisfactory formula.

The first two chapters of the book are intended mainly to give some idea of the obstacles – natural and historical – that made the task of building a nation in Italy after 1860 so difficult. They do little more than provide an introduction to the main part of the book, which is concerned with the last two hundred years. As a result, the sections on the Middle Ages and the Renaissance are extremely cursory. I start with the fall of the Roman Empire, as it was then that the political fragmentation of the peninsula began. The final chapter comes right down to the present. Italy is currently facing huge economic challenges. Though their outcome, in political terms, is very hard to predict, the tensions between local, national, and supra-national identities that have so often characterised the country's modern history are likely to make Italy a barometer of future European trends – as on a number of important occasions in the last two centuries.

The first edition of this book appeared in the spring of 1994, when Italy seemed to be at a cross-roads. Silvio Berlusconi had just been elected prime minister, and the parties that had dominated the political life of the country for nearly half a century were being swept away in the wake of a huge corruption scandal and a much-applauded offensive by the judiciary. Nearly twenty years later, the hopes generated at that time of a root-and-branch change in political culture appear to have been misplaced. The so-called 'Second

Republic’ has turned out in many fundamental respects to be very similar to the ‘First’. For the second edition, I have updated the last chapter to cover the extraordinary era of Silvio Berlusconi, which has left the country grappling with problems arguably far more serious than when he first took power. I have also made some small changes to earlier chapters to reflect recent shifts in scholarship – especially in relation to the *Risorgimento* and to the fascist period.

A number of people were kind enough to look at drafts of the first edition of this book. I am particularly grateful to Professor Adrian Lyttelton for reading the entire text, and commenting very perceptively on it. Denis Mack Smith, Professor Donald Matthew, and Professor John A. Davis read individual chapters, and made many extremely valuable suggestions. Dr Shirley Vinall, Professor Percy Allum, Dr Jonathan Morris, and Dr Patricia Morison also read specific chapters, and offered much useful advice. Professor Giulio Lepschy indicated a number of improvements to the first section, and also helped with the map of Italian dialects and the table of dialect examples. My thanks to all concerned. I naturally take full responsibility for any errors that remain.

CHRONOLOGY

- 410 The Visigoths, led by Alaric, sack Rome.
- 476 Romulus Augustulus, the last Roman emperor in the West, is overthrown by Odoacer.
- 493 Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths, defeats Odoacer and establishes rule over Italy.
- 535–53 The eastern emperor in Byzantium seeks to recover Italy from the Ostrogoths during the ‘Gothic wars’.
- 568–9 The Lombards invade Italy and occupy northern Italy as far as Milan.
- 751–5 The Lombards capture Ravenna and move against Rome; Pope Stephen II appeals to the Franks for help; the ‘Donation of Constantine’ is produced in Rome around this time.
- 773–4 Charlemagne conquers the kingdom of the Lombards and is elected king.
- 800 Charlemagne is crowned emperor by Pope Leo III in St Peter’s, Rome.
- 827 Arab incursions begin into Sicily and southern Italy.
- 962 The German king, Otto I, is crowned emperor in Rome after conquering much of northern Italy.
- 1072 Norman forces capture Palermo and secure control of much of Sicily from the Arabs.

- c. 1080 – c. 1130 The ‘communal movement’ sees many cities in northern and central Italy asserting their autonomy from imperial rule.
- 1152 Frederick Barbarossa becomes emperor and sets out to restore imperial authority in Italy.
- 1176 Barbarossa is defeated by the cities of the ‘Lombard League’ at the battle of Legnano.
- c.1225–50 Emperor Frederick II endeavours to reassert imperial authority over the communes; Guelf (pro-papal) and Ghibelline (pro-imperial) parties appear in many cities.
- 1266 Charles of Anjou defeats Frederick II’s son, Manfred, at the battle of Benevento and takes control of southern Italy and Sicily in the name of the Guelf cause.
- 1282 Revolt of the ‘Sicilian Vespers’ in Palermo against the French leads to the capture of Sicily by the Aragonese.
- 1302 Dante Alighieri (1265–1321) is banished from his native Florence following years of violent struggles between Black and White factions of the Guelfs; in exile he writes the *Divine Comedy*.
- 1309–77 Residence of the popes in Avignon.
- 1343–6 Bankruptcy of the Bardi, the Peruzzi and other Florentine banking houses.
- 1378 Revolt of the Florentine woolworkers (Ciompi).
- 1378–1417 Papal schism; rival popes in Rome, Avignon and later Pisa.
- 1442 Alfonso of Aragon conquers the kingdom of Naples.
- 1454 The Peace of Lodi ends several decades of conflict between the states of Italy.
- 1494 Invasion of Italy by Charles VIII of France marks the beginning of several decades of struggle between French, Spanish and Imperial forces for control of the peninsula.
- 1513 Niccolò Machiavelli writes *The Prince*.

Chronology

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- 1527 Sack of Rome by German and Spanish troops.
 1542 Papal (Roman) Inquisition established.
 1559 Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis recognises Spanish control of most of Italy.
 1630 Plague in Milan and other parts of northern Italy (depicted in Alessandro Manzoni's novel *I Promessi Sposi* (The Betrothed) (first edition, 1827)).
 1647–8 Revolts in Naples and Palermo against Spanish rule.
 1701–14 War of the Spanish Succession leads to all Spanish Habsburg possessions in Italy passing to the Austrian Habsburgs.
 1734 Charles of Bourbon becomes king of Naples and Sicily.
 1748 Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle ends the War of the Austrian Succession and confirms Austrian Habsburg dominance of Italy.
 1763–4 Famine strikes Naples, Florence, Rome and other cities.
 1796 Napoleon Bonaparte invades Italy, defeats the Austrians and establishes the Cisalpine Republic.
 1797 Venice ceded to Austria with the Treaty of Campoformio, ending Venice's history as an independent republic.
 1805 Napoleon crowned king of Italy in Milan.
 1807 Ugo Foscolo writes his patriotic poem *Dei Sepolcri* (Of Sepulchres).
 1808 French troops occupy Rome; Joachim Murat becomes king of Naples.
 1814–15 The Congress of Vienna and the battle of Waterloo (18 June 1815) bring to an end the Napoleonic era; Lombardy and Venetia are annexed to the Habsburg empire; King Victor Emmanuel I is restored in Piedmont-Sardinia, Grand Duke Ferdinand III in Tuscany, Duke Francis IV in Modena, King Ferdinand IV in Naples.

- 1820–1 Revolutions break out in Naples, Palermo and Piedmont; the Quadruple Alliance (Austria, Prussia, Britain and Russia) sanctions the principle of intervention against revolution in Italy.
- 1831 Revolutions in the Duchy of Modena and parts of the Papal States; Giuseppe Mazzini (1805–72) founds his patriotic secret society, Giovine Italia (Young Italy).
- 1840–2 Alessandro Manzoni publishes a revised version of *I Promessi Sposi* (The Betrothed) in Tuscan literary idiom.
- 1843–4 Publication of Vincenzo Gioberti's *Del Primato Morale e Civile degli Italiani* (On the Moral and Civil Pre-eminence of the Italians) and Cesare Balbo's *Delle Speranze d'Italia* (On the Hopes of Italy).
- 1846 Election of Pope Pius IX.
- 1848 Revolutions break out across Italy (January–March); King Charles Albert of Piedmont-Sardinia grants a constitution (Statuto), declares war on Austria and enters Lombardy following five days of street fighting in Milan (March); Daniele Manin proclaims a republic in Venice; Pius IX denounces the war against Austria (29 April); Charles Albert is defeated by the Austrians at Custoza and withdraws from Lombardy (July–August).
- 1849 Following the flight of Pius IX, the Roman Republic is declared (February); Charles Albert resumes the war against Austria, is defeated at Novara, and abdicates in favour of his son, Victor Emmanuel II (23 March); French troops defeat the Roman Republic (June); the Venetian Republic falls to the Austrians after a siege (August).
- 1852 Count Camillo Benso di Cavour becomes prime minister of Piedmont-Sardinia.

- 1855 Piedmont joins the Anglo-French alliance in the Crimean War.
- 1858 Cavour and Emperor Napoleon III meet secretly in the Vosges to plan a war against Austria and a new political order in Italy (July).
- 1859 Austria declares war on Piedmont (April); risings break out in Tuscany, Parma, Modena and parts of the Papal States; French and Piedmontese forces defeat the Austrians at Magenta (4 June), San Martino and Solferino (24 June); an armistice is signed at Villafranca with Austria, and Lombardy is annexed to Piedmont; elected assemblies in the central Italian duchies and the papal Legations vote for annexation to Piedmont (August–September).
- 1860 Nice and Savoy are ceded by Piedmont to Napoleon III; an insurrection breaks out in Sicily (April); Giuseppe Garibaldi lands in Marsala (11 May) at the head of a volunteer force ('The Thousand'), defeats Bourbon troops at Calatafimi (15 May), captures Palermo, and enters Naples (7 September); Piedmontese troops enter the Papal States (18 September); plebiscites on annexation are held in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies (21 October), Umbria and the Marche (4 November).
- 1861 First elections are held for the new Italian parliament; the Kingdom of Italy is formally constituted and Victor Emmanuel II assumes the title King of Italy (17 March); Cavour dies (6 June); violence and disorder escalate in the South, beginning what is to be known as a 'war against brigands'.
- 1862 Garibaldi attempts to march on Rome from Sicily and is halted on the slopes of Aspromonte (July).
- 1864 Pius IX publishes the Syllabus of Errors, widening the breach between the Church and the liberal state.

- 1865 The capital is moved from Turin to Florence; the first mention of ‘the Mafia’ in an official document.
- 1866 Italy enters the Austro-Prussian war and is defeated by the Austrians on land at Custoza (24 June) and at sea at Lissa (20 July); the Veneto is ceded by Austria to Napoleon III, who passes it to Italy.
- 1870 Italian troops enter Rome following the withdrawal of the French garrison and the defeat of Napoleon III by the Prussians (20 September); Rome and Lazio are annexed by plebiscite; Pius IX denounces the seizure of Rome and excommunicates Victor Emmanuel II.
- 1871 The Law of Guarantees offers protection and independence to the papacy but is rejected by Pius IX; the capital is transferred to Rome.
- 1876 Agostino Depretis becomes prime minister of the first government of the Left.
- 1878 King Victor Emmanuel II dies and is succeeded by his son, Umberto I (9 January)
- 1882 Electoral reform is passed; Italy joins the Triple Alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary; Garibaldi dies (2 June).
- 1887 Francesco Crispi becomes prime minister and embarks on an aggressive foreign policy in Europe and Ethiopia.
- 1892 The Italian Socialist Party founded; the eruption of the Banca Romana scandal threatens the public finances and the credibility of parliament.
- 1894 Crispi declares a ‘state of siege’ in Sicily and suppresses the socialist movement of the Fasci Siciliani (January).
- 1896 Italian forces defeated in Ethiopia at the battle of Adua (1 March).
- 1900 King Umberto I is assassinated by an anarchist and is succeeded by his son, Victor Emmanuel III (29 July).

Chronology

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- 1901 Giovanni Giolitti enters the government of Giuseppe Zanardelli and embarks on a conciliatory policy towards the socialists.
- 1903 Giolitti becomes prime minister.
- 1908 Publication of the review *La Voce* by Giuseppe Prezzolini.
- 1910 The Italian Nationalist Association founded in Florence (December).
- 1911 Italy declares war on Turkey and invades Libya (29 September).
- 1912 Introduction of near-universal male suffrage.
- 1914 Red Week (June); outbreak of the First World War and declaration by Italy of neutrality (August); Mussolini founds *Il Popolo d'Italia* and is expelled from the Socialist Party (November).
- 1915 Treaty of London with Britain, France and Russia (26 April); Italy declares war on Austria (24 May).
- 1917 Italian defeat at Caporetto (October).
- 1918 Italian victory at Vittorio Veneto and armistice with Austria (4 November).
- 1919 Mussolini founds the *Fasci di Combattimento* (23 March); D'Annunzio occupies Fiume (September).
- 1920 Occupation of the factories (September); paramilitary action by fascist squads escalates.
- 1921 The Italian Communist Party (PCI) founded following a split in the Socialist Party at the Congress of Livorno (January); fascists join the list of government candidates in the general elections (May); foundation of the Fascist Party (PNF) (November).
- 1922 March on Rome; Mussolini appointed head of a coalition government (28–29 October).
- 1923 Merger of the Nationalists with the PNF (February); occupation of Corfu by Italian forces (August).
- 1924 Fascist victory in general elections (April); murder of socialist leader Giacomo Matteotti and withdrawal of opposition parties from parliament (June).

- 1925 Mussolini accepts responsibility for fascist violence and initiates a dictatorship (3 January).
- 1926 Following attempts on Mussolini's life, all opposition parties are banned and the powers of the police are strengthened with a Public Safety Law (November).
- 1929 The Lateran Pacts are signed, bringing to an end the conflict between the Vatican and the Italian state (11 February).
- 1935 Italy invades Ethiopia (October); sanctions are imposed by the League of Nations.
- 1936 Proclamation of the Italian Empire (9 May); Italy's forces intervene in the Spanish Civil War; Mussolini declares the existence of a Rome–Berlin Axis (September).
- 1938 Mussolini accepts Hitler's annexation of Austria (March); Racial Laws are introduced (September).
- 1939 Italy occupies Albania (April); Pact of Steel signed with Germany (22 May); war breaks out between Germany, France and Britain and Italy declares its 'non-belligerency' (September).
- 1940 Italy declares war on France and Britain (10 June); Italy invades Greece (28 October).
- 1941 Italian navy defeated at Cape Matapan (March); Italian expeditionary forces are sent to Russia.
- 1942 The battle of El Alamein opens the way for the loss of Libya (November).
- 1943 Allied forces land in Sicily (10 July); Mussolini is dismissed as prime minister by Victor Emmanuel III and replaced by Pietro Badoglio (25 July); an armistice is signed with the Allies (3 September); Mussolini is liberated by the Germans (12 September) and sets up the Republic of Salò.
- 1944 Rome is liberated by the Allies (4 June).
- 1945 Final Allied offensive in northern Italy; Mussolini is executed by partisans (28 April).

- 1946 Elections for a Constituent Assembly and referendum on the monarchy are held (2 June); Italy becomes a Republic.
- 1948 The new Constitution comes into force (1 January); the Christian Democrats win an absolute majority of seats in the general elections (18 April).
- 1956 Khrushchev's report on Stalin and the Soviet invasion of Hungary lead to heavy defections from the PCI.
- 1957 The Treaty of Rome is signed (25 March) and Italy becomes a member of the European Economic Community.
- c.1958 – c. 1963 Years of exceptional economic growth that become known as the 'economic miracle'.
- 1958–63 Pontificate of John XXIII.
- 1967–8 Violent protests and demonstrations by students against the university system and the Vietnam War.
- 1969 Mounting trade union militancy culminates in the 'Hot Autumn'; a bomb planted by neo-fascists in Piazza Fontana, Milan, kills sixteen (December).
- 1970 The 'Workers' Statute' is introduced (May); the Divorce Law is introduced (December).
- 1973 The leader of the PCI, Enrico Berlinguer, proposes the 'historic compromise'.
- 1976 The PCI obtains its highest ever vote in general elections (34.4 per cent) (June).
- 1978 The DC leader, Aldo Moro, is killed by the Red Brigades (9 May); the Abortion Law is passed (22 May); John Paul II is elected pope (October).
- 1980 A bomb at Bologna railway station kills eighty-five (August).
- 1981 Giovanni Spadolini, leader of the Republican Party, becomes the first non-Christian Democrat prime minister since 1945.
- 1982 General Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa is killed by Cosa Nostra in Palermo (3 September).

- 1983–7 Bettino Craxi, leader of the Socialist Party, is prime minister.
- 1991 The PCI is dissolved and splits into the Democratic Party of the Left and the Communist Refoundation.
- 1992 Start of the *tangentopoli* scandal; the separatist Northern League makes a break-through in the general elections (April); the leading anti-Mafia investigator, Giovanni Falcone, is murdered in Sicily (23 May).
- 1994 Silvio Berlusconi launches the Forza Italia party and becomes prime minister of a coalition government of the Northern League and the far right Alleanza Nazionale.
- 1995–6 ‘Technocratic’ government of Lamberto Dini helps to restore credibility to the public finances.
- 1998 Italy secures admission to the single European currency (May).
- 2001–6 Berlusconi is prime minister at the head of the centre-right House of Freedoms coalition.
- 2011 Berlusconi is obliged to step down as prime minister amidst growing international concern about Italy’s public finances; Mario Monti replaces him at the head of a technocratic government (November).