

SICILY: TRIUMPHING OVER THE INVADERS
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Because of its position in the Mediterranean, Sicily has been an island where peoples travelling for peaceful and not so peaceful purposes between north and south and between east and west have crossed and many times have decided to stay. Its history is a story of constant invasion.

What is not always pointed out in talking about the invaders is that, when the invaders stayed as permanent residents, they became Sicilians. DNA studies of the Sicilian population recently showed that Sicilians are 35 percent Greek, 6 percent Arab, and near Palermo 20 percent Norman.

The climactic point in the wonderful novel, **The Leopard**, by Prince Giuseppe di Lampedusa, (published in 1958 after his death) comes after Sicily has been incorporated in 1861 into the new Kingdom of Italy. An emissary is sent to the Prince of Salina, whose family crest is a Leopard, to persuade him to become a member of the new Italian Senate. The Prince explains why he will not accept:

“Do you really think, Chevalley, that you are the first who has hoped to canalize Sicily into the flow of universal history?”

I wonder how many (1) Moslem imams, (2) how many of King Roger’s knights, (3) how many Swabian scribes, (4) how many Angevin barons, (5) and how many jurists of the Most Catholic King have conceived the same fine folly; and (6) how many Spanish viceroys too, (7) how many of Charles III's reforming functionaries! And who knows now what happened to them all! Sicily wanted to sleep in spite of their invocations; for why should she listen to them if she herself is rich, if she’s wise, if she's civilized, (if she's honest), if she's admired and envied by all, if, in a word, she is perfect? “.

Ironically enough, he does not mention the three invaders with whom we must begin: the Phoenicians, the Greeks, and the Romans, or the island's first inhabitants called the Siculi who gave their name to Sicily.

The first invaders were the Phoenicians from Lebanon, who founded the future city of Palermo and passed their control of the western side of the island to their offspring in Carthage.

The Greeks were the first important settlers, for the five-hundred-year period from 750 to 250 B.C. By 800 B.C. Greece was overpopulated. To get rid of their surplus population, a small number of Greek cities would each sponsor a colony. The very first Greek settlements in Italy were on the Bay of Naples, hence the name—Nea Polis or New City. According to Homer, it was very hard to get to Naples from Greece because you had to pass between two great perils, Scylla and Charybdis, on the Straits of Messina between Sicily and the Italian mainland. For some reason, Odysseus decided he had to pass through there on his rather circuitous way back to Greece from the Trojan War.

Scylla was on the Calabrian side. She was a supernatural creature with 12 feet and 6 heads. Each head had 3 rows of teeth like a shark's and loins covered with heads of dogs. She came out from her cave to devour travelers. Odysseus lost six men.

According to Homer, "they writhed gasping as Scylla swung them up her cliff and there, at her cavern's mouth, she bolted them down raw...while they were screaming out and flinging their arms toward me, lost in that mortal struggle."

Charybdis lived in Sicily facing Scylla. She was a strange creature who lived under a fig tree and drank down and belched out the waters of the Straits three times a day, preferably when ships were passing through, so that she could eat the sailors. Odysseus, who for some strange

reason was traveling on a raft, escaped by clinging to the branches of the fig tree and waiting until his raft had been regurgitated.

The Greeks sailing to Naples founded two convenient ports on the Straits of Messina, Messina itself and on the mainland the city of Reggio Calabria. The Greeks also founded the lovely town of Taormina, which is famous for its Greco-Roman theater.

Next, they founded cities on the south coast. Gela was founded in 688, and just a hundred years later Gela itself founded another wonderful city called Akragas, or today's Agrigento. Within a hundred years, these settlers at Agrigento had built nine temples, of which two--the Temple of Hercules and the Temple of Concord--are among the finest survivals of fifth century B.C. Greek building anywhere.

Finally the Greeks founded Catania and Syracuse, two very important settlements on the east coast on the edge of the most fertile plain in Sicily. It was in Syracuse that Sicily enjoyed its first Golden Age.

The Greek cities in Sicily, like those in Greece itself, fell under the control of so-called "tyrants" in the sixth and early fifth centuries. The first prominent one was Hiero, who was often visited by the great Greek poet Pindar (518-438 BC), who was deeply impressed by the island. Before I read his poem, this is a good moment to tell you why Sicily is called Persephone's Island.

Demeter was the goddess of harvest and fertility. By Zeus she became the mother of Persephone. Persephone loved to walk in the countryside of Sicily, where she was captured by Pluto, god of the underworld, and taken underground as his queen. Demeter was overwhelmingly sad, and as a result all the leaves and fruits on earth faded. Pluto said he could not let Persephone return because she had tasted the pomegranate, the fruit of the dead, and must remain below. However, under the pressure of the gods, he

compromised and agreed that she could return to earth for six months on condition that she come back to the underworld for six months. This was the creation of the seasons, for when she emerged, the earth sprang into springtime and when she returned to the underworld, it was the beginning of winter. Her entry into the underworld was near Enna in Sicily, and so Sicily became Persephone's island. Shrines were erected to her in Sicily in Greek and Roman times. I recommend an excellent book, *Persephone's Island*, by Mary Taylor Simeti.

Pindar lived mainly in Thebes, but came often to Syracuse to the court of Hiero. Here is his First Nemean Ode:

Scatter, now, some glory on this island, which the lord of Olympus,

Zeus gave Persephone and bowed his head to assent, the pride of the blossoming earth.

Sicily, the rich, to control under towering cities opulent;
Kronion [father of Zeus] granted her also a people in love
with brazen warfare, horsemen,
a people garlanded over and again with the golden leaves of
olive Olympian.

The most important of the new tyrants was Dionysius I, of Syracuse, who was so tyrannical that he lived in fear of his life. According to a contemporary historian:

“Unwilling to trust his head to a barber, he taught his own daughters to shave him. Royal virgins were thus reduced to the servile trade of male barber, cutting their father's hair and beard. He went still further: when they grew up he took away the cutting instruments and decided that they should singe his beard and hair with heated walnut-shells. He had two wives, and before he came to them at night he had everything examined and searched. Around the bed he had

a broad trench dug, traversed by a little wooden footbridge; after he closed the door of the chamber, he himself removed the bridge.”

Plato visited Syracuse on three separate occasions, trying without success to turn Dionysius and later his son into the kind of philosopher-king whom he would describe in his masterwork, *The Republic*.

The next of the invaders were the Romans, who, after consolidating their hold on Central Italy, drove to the south, taking first the Greek cities of the Bay of Naples and then striking further south to take the whole of the southern mainland. At this point, Sicily became involved in the great wars of Rome and Carthage, called the Punic Wars. The Roman fleet defeated the Carthaginians off the Sicilian coast and took the whole of Carthaginian Sicily. At war's end, they helped themselves to Greek Sicily as well, and made the island into the first “province” of the new Roman Empire.

This was vitally important for Sicily and for Rome itself. Whereas, on the Italian mainland they had made the Greek lands part of the Roman state or confederacy, with the same rights as Romans, as a province they were governed by a praetor sent out yearly, with a good chance for him to make a fortune in short time.

The Romans introduced many of the disastrous economic features that were to dog Sicily for two thousand years, especially *latifundiae*, the great estates worked by gangs of slaves and later by low-paid laborers, a terrible system of landholding which was still the curse of Sicily in the twentieth century. In spite of this, however, it was in some ways a prosperous period. The evidence can be seen in the great Roman theater that was built over the Greek one at Taormina and especially in ruins left in Syracuse. The great estates were also beautifully luxurious, as evident in the villa

at Piazza Armerina, with its mosaics of lovely girls in bikinis.

The Roman view of the Greeks was always one of admiration..

This admiration shows in the famous lines from Virgil's Aeneid, as Aeneas supposedly sails along the coast of Sicily on his way to Rome:

We round the point, and lo! before our eyes
 Stands Camarina that the Fates forbade
 E'er to disturb, and then the plains of Gela,
 Gela, named from its river's furious stream,
 Then lofty Acragas [Agrigento] displays afar
 Her mighty walls, where long ago
 High-mettled horses were reared.
 Then with favoring breeze
 Palmy Selinus [Selinunte], leaving thee, I thread
 The Channels dangerous with sunken reefs
 Of Lilybaeu, till come at last
 To port at Drepanum (Trapani) on that joyless shore.

In 535 AD, the Emperor Justinian in Constantinople decided to reconquer the Western Roman Empire, and his troops were welcomed in Sicily. Sicily was governed from Constantinople for almost four hundred years. But Byzantine rule was not deep or important, because Sicily was under constant attack from the Muslims, who had taken over most of North Africa.

In the ninth century the Muslims turned to conquer Sicily. The Arab ruler of Tunisia captured Palermo in 830 and made it his capital. He took Messina in 842 and Syracuse in 878. By then the Arabs were in almost total control of Sicily.

Muslim Arab rule lasted two hundred years, and it was vitally important for Sicily's development. .

The Arabs brought major economic advances. They introduced the lemon and orange; cotton; sugar cane; silkworms and mulberry trees; the date palm; and possibly also rice. Hence Arab accounts refer to Sicily as a garden paradise,

Sicily was also part of a major trading empire stretching from the Near East to Morocco and Spain. Very large numbers of immigrants, especially Berbers and Arabs, perhaps even half a million in the whole island, settled. Palermo became a great cultural center. It may have had a population of 100,000. As in Muslim Spain, there were many Arab scholars, as well as a tolerance for the Greek monasteries. Sicily was thus ready for the mixture of Muslim and Christian cultures which began with the Normans and was continued by the German rulers of the Hohenstaufen dynasty.

The next group of invaders, the Vikings or Normans, were perhaps the most extraordinary of all. Originally from Scandinavia, from the seventh century on the Vikings had struck out in many directions, to Russia, to the British Isles, to Iceland and Greenland, and to Normandy in France, which the French king granted to them in return for stopping attacking the rest of France. By the year 1000 there were many Norman knights, mostly younger sons, who could not find enough land in Normandy. Surprisingly, they saw the opportunity in Southern Italy. Instead of coming by Viking boat around Gibraltar, they probably rode there across the Alps, to Southern Italy, where they hired themselves out as mercenaries or simply became robber barons.

One of the most prominent of these Norman knights was Tancred de Hauteville, who, with twelve sons, desperately needed more land. They served as mercenaries for the pope, who gave them permission to seize whatever land in Southern Italy they could capture. The most powerful of Tancred's sons was Robert Guiscard (1015-

1085), who concentrated on conquering Southern Italy.

The conquest of Muslim Sicily was assigned to the youngest brother Roger Guiscard (1031-1101). He had first impressed contemporaries (paid sycophants?) as astonishingly good looking:

“He was of extreme beauty, of lofty stature, of graceful shape, eloquent in speech and cool in counsel, far-seeing in laying his plans, affable and open-hearted, strong of arm and a gallant fighter.”

He invaded Sicily in 1060 with only 60 cavalry but in 1064 came back with a thousand. They were helped by local Christians, and even by some Muslims. The conquest was slow and bloody, and only in 1091 was the conquest of Sicily complete and Roger became Count Roger I of Sicily. Since very few Normans came to settle, he sought reconciliation with the local population. Arabs were allowed to keep their lands and positions in the administration. All religions were tolerated, including Judaism, and all languages were accepted, including Arabic, Greek, Italian, and Norman French.

ROGER II COUNT OF SICILY, 1101-1130; King of Sicily 1130-1154)

Roger I's son, Roger II, a true cosmopolitan, was son of a Norman father and a North Italian mother. He was educated by Greek and Arab tutors. He liked Arab ways so much that he kept a harem in a part of the palace looked after by eunuchs, who were Muslim Arabs.

He showed his ambition at a very early age. He was playing cards for money with his older brother Simon and won easily. With great scorn for someone who let himself be beaten so quickly, he said to Simon: “It is perfectly clear that I should be the ruler after our father's death rather than you. So, when I am ruler I will make you a bishop or even Pope,

for that suits you a lot better.”

One observer said he seemed to do more asleep than others did awake.

After he inherited Southern Italy in 1030, he decided to make himself King of Sicily (meaning Sicily and Southern Italy). Especially in his lavish coronation, he showed that he modeled himself on Justinian--a priest-king, before whom even the bishops had to prostrate themselves. He arrived at the cathedral with horses with saddles of gold and bridles of gold and silver. He was anointed king by a cardinal who was nephew of the pope, but the crown was put on his head by his own chief vassal, another Norman. A huge banquet was served afterwards on dishes of gold and silver by Arab servants dressed in expensive silks.

He relished the tolerant atmosphere created by his father, but also exceeded him in his ambitions to make Sicily a dominant power in the Mediterranean. He used the Second Crusade to sack Athens and other Greek cities. He established territorial control of much of the coast of Tunisia and Libya and especially aimed to control the straits between Sicily and North Africa. He also amassed one of the largest royal incomes in Europe, perhaps, it was said, even greater than that of Norman England.

As his architectural legacy, he left two magnificent buildings. Almost immediately after his coronation he began the predominantly Norman-style cathedral at a newly created bishopric in Cefalú on the north coast, which is a wonderful example of the mosaics that are the glory of the Normans in Sicily. In the royal palace of Palermo he built the Capella Palatina (Palatine Chapel). It is notable for Greek (i.e. Byzantine) mosaics of superb quality, illustrating both Orthodox and Latin Christian beliefs. A honeycomb ceiling in the nave and the cupola was probably constructed by Arabs. And it has Norman arches.

Roger II was succeeded by his son William I (ruled 1154-

1166), who quickly earned the nickname of William the Bad. He exacted huge taxes that infuriated the nobles into constant revolts, in one of which they sacked the royal palace.

In contrast with his father, the next king was known as William II the Good (ruled 1166-1189). With him Sicily moved into a true feudal age, with many knights and clerics being brought in from Normandy and England to run the government and the church. However, he also continued the ways of earlier Norman kings. He supported Arab poets, his concubines were Muslim, and his bodyguard black African slaves.

William II's greatest cultural contribution was to build MONREALE CATHEDRAL (1172-1189) just five miles from Palermo. Because he was quarreling with the Archbishop of Palermo, who he felt was too rich and powerful, he nominated a second archbishop and built for him the finest church in Sicily, which was also to be the mausoleum for his family.

The nave of the church itself was mainly in Norman style as was the wonderful cloister beside it. The two hundred carved capitals showed every style of Sicily. But the principal feature was the mosaics, probably constructed by Greeks, that cover seventy thousand square feet.

HOHENSTAUFEN SICILY, 1194-1266

William II died in 1189, leaving no children. His legal heir was his aunt Constance, a child of Roger II, who had been married for political reasons to the future Holy Roman Emperor Henry VI of the Hohenstaufen family (who was half her age).

In 1191 Henry VI was crowned Holy Roman Emperor in Rome and then continued south to claim Southern Italy and Sicily for Constance and himself. He was crowned King in

Palermo on Christmas Day, 1194. Constance, now aged forty, stayed behind in Southern Italy to give birth to their child. To prove the authenticity of her child's birth, given her age, she had nineteen cardinals and bishops witness the birth of her son, the famous Frederick II, on December 26, 1194.

In only three years Henry made himself one of the most hated rulers of Sicily for his savagery in treating his opponents and for his looting of the island. Even his wife came to hate him and joined in a plot to murder him. But he caught malaria hunting in the marshes and died suddenly to everyone's relief.

Frederick II was only three when Henry VI died, but he was crowned king in the Cathedral of Palermo. The German knights ran Sicily until Frederick took personal power. Frederick showed himself to be a true Sicilian rather than a German. (Frederick II's Sicilian grandfather was Roger II; his German grandfather was the famous Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa). He was brought to Palermo in 1194 right after his birth and grew up in the royal palace in Palermo. He learned all the languages of the island--Greek, Latin, German, Sicilian, North Italian, and Norman-French. He quickly recognized the importance of knowing non-Christian culture, including the works of Jewish and Muslim philosophers. He was interested in literature and himself wrote court poetry in Sicilian vernacular.

Here is one example:

According to my belief
There is no lady alive
So beautiful it seems.
Nor can any compare with you

In cultivation, sovereign lady.
 Your kind and lovely face
 Gives me comfort and cheers me.
 I appreciate your qualities, my lady
 To the full extent of my being.

Secondo mia credenza
 non è donna che sia
 alta, sì bella, pare
 nè c'agìa insegnamento
 'nver voi, donna sovrana.
 La vostra ciera umana
 mi dà conforto e facemi alegrare;
 s'eo pregiare - vi posso, donna mia,
 più conto mi ne tegno tuttavia

He learned to love science more than the arts. He bought scientific instruments and rare books. He studied mathematics and problems of technology, such as draining marshes or making machines for warfare. His court in Palermo became a center for the study of mathematics, one of only three in Europe. He was fascinated with animals all his life. He was interested in breeding different strains of horses, and had a menagerie of camels, giraffes, monkeys, and an elephant. He studied the movements of fish and of birds, and wrote a treatise in Latin on falcons used in hunting.

His whole reign was, however, dominated by struggles with the Papacy. The Popes called him a baptized sultan. Frederick II intended to have a unified empire from Northern Germany to Sicily, which would surround the Papal territories, and be able to hold off both the Muslims and the Byzantines. The Pope's tactic was to force him to promise to go on a Crusade, and then to excommunicate him if he did

not. He got around this in 1227 by organizing a Crusade and then landing in Southern Italy instead of going to the Holy Land. So, the Pope excommunicated him. When he finally made it to the Holy Land, he negotiated with the Arab ruler of Jerusalem to let him have the city without fighting, on the grounds that it was no longer worth having without trade or walls. The ruler agreed and Frederick was able to get himself crowned King of Jerusalem, which once more annoyed the Pope who excommunicated him again.

Yet Frederick's reign was not a total benefit for Sicily.

He missed the opportunity to make Palermo the head of a great trading empire, like those being created by Venice and Genoa. He dragged Sicily into wars with the Papacy and northern and central Europe in which it had no stake. It is usually considered that the long decline of Sicily began with the death of Frederick II in 1250, but it could be argued that it began earlier.

THE END OF HOHENSTAUFEN RULE IN SICILY, 1250-1266

When Frederick II died in 1250, Pope Innocent IV rejoiced immediately. "Let the heavens rejoice. Let the earth be filled with gladness. For the fall of the tyrant has changed the thunderbolts and tempests that God Almighty held over your heads into gentle zephyrs and fecund dews."

An illegitimate son of Frederick named Manfred, who was ruling Southern Italy, then fought to gain control of Sicily and in 1258 he was crowned in Palermo as King of Sicily. He was immediately opposed by the new French Pope Urban IV, who, claiming that Sicily was part of the Papal domains, offered the throne to Charles of Anjou, the younger brother of the famous King Louis IX of France.

Charles, young and ruthless and lacking in all moral

scruples, saw the chance of acquiring a fine kingship for himself. He recognized the Pope's authority, promised him control of the Sicilian church and huge sums of money, and set off in 1265 to overthrow Manfred. The Pope crowned Charles King of Sicily in Rome. The Sicilians rallied behind Manfred seeing him as a son of Frederick II, even if illegitimate, who had inherited his father's intellect and wide tolerance, his science and culture. And, unlike his father, he was also extremely good looking.

But Charles was able to put together a large army, which Manfred met to the north of Naples. There in 1266, in a long battle, Manfred was killed. Charles continued on to Naples. He had one dynastic problem left--Sicilians thought that the rightful heir to Sicily after Manfred was Conradin, a fifteen-year-old boy who was the grandson of Frederick II and nephew of Manfred. Those opposed to Charles of Anjou decided to make a last effort to restore southern Italy and Sicily to the Hohenstaufen family and threw their support to Conradin. When the two armies met, Charles won an overwhelming victory and shortly after took Conradin prisoner. In 1268, Conradin was tried in a phony trial for treason and was publicly beheaded in Naples. Charles was excoriated throughout Europe even by the Pope, but he had made his control of southern Italy and Sicily safe.

FRENCH RULE IN SICILY UNDER CHARLES OF ANJOU, 1266-1282

Charles of Anjou was now King of Sicily, including Southern Italy, but he had no interest personally in being in Sicily and only went there once. He preferred Naples, and so he infuriated the Sicilians by running Sicily from the magnificent Castel Nuovo on the waterfront of Naples.

On Easter Monday, March 28, 1282, the crowds of Palermo

had gathered for vesper services. French officials and soldiers, many apparently quite drunk, mingled with the unfriendly crowd, and one sergeant was accused of taking liberties with a Sicilian woman. Her husband then, in good Sicilian style, stabbed him to death. The French tried to take revenge but found themselves surrounded by the crowd, and many were murdered. At that moment, the church bells began to ring for Vespers. During the bell-ringing, Sicilian men ran through the streets of Palermo crying in Sicilian, “Manau li Franchiski”, or “death to the French”. Most of Palermo joined in, entering the inns and houses where French could be found, and murdering them, as well as women and children they thought connected with them. In the monasteries, they identified foreign friars (i.e. French) by making them say “ciciri” in Sicilian, and murdering those who could not pronounce it. By morning four thousand French had been killed. During Monday night and Tuesday, messengers went throughout Sicily bringing news of the uprising, which is now called the Sicilian Vespers, and calling on others to do the same, which they did.

At this point, Aragon entered the Sicilian story. In the thirteenth century, Aragon had become one of the major naval empires in the Mediterranean. It had taken the Balearic islands and Sardinia, and King Pere III now had his eyes on Sicily. In 1262 he had married Constance, the daughter of King Manfred of Sicily. (NOTE: this Constance should not be confused with the earlier Constance who married Holy Roman Emperor Henry VI and made possible the transition from Norman rule to Hohenstaufen rule in Sicily). With the death of Manfred in battle with Charles of Anjou, and Charles’s execution of his nephew Conradin, this Constance had become heiress of Sicily, and her husband Pere intended to rule for her and for their future children. Constance thus linked the Aragon royal family to the Hohenstaufen and gave the Sicilians a reason to accept, not

always happily, the rule of Aragon and, later, of the newly united kingdom of Spain.

Pere sailed from Barcelona and landed in North Africa. But when the Sicilians obligingly asked him to make Constance their ruler, on August 1282 he moved on to Palermo where he (not Constance) was proclaimed King of Sicily. He and Charles at one point promised to settle the whole matter by fighting a duel, first just the two of them and then between a hundred knights on each side. But that was soon forgotten when both groups turned up at the wrong time. Charles was forced by the arrival of Pere's forces to withdraw to the mainland, and Pere took over Sicily.

Only in April 1283 did Queen Constance arrive with two of their six boys, James (Jaume) and Frederick.

When Pere died in 1285, he passed Sicily to his younger son Jaume. In 1291 Jaume became King of Aragon and his younger brother Frederick became King of Sicily.

ARAGON RULE FROM PALERMO, 1282-1409;
DIRECT RULE FROM ARAGON, 1409-1469; AND FROM
SPAIN, 1469-1713

From the Sicilian Vespers in 1282 until 1409, Sicily was governed from Palermo by members of the royal family of Aragon. But in 1409 it came under the direct rule of the king of Aragon and was ruled from Barcelona. After the marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon to Isabella of Castile in 1469, it was governed from the various capitals of the united Spanish monarchy until 1713.

The power of the Church was seen in the flowering of Italian or Roman Baroque, with a Sicilian overlay. Again it was in Palermo that the finest examples of Sicilian Baroque are found, although there are also beautiful examples of city planning and church building in Trapani, Catania, and

Syracuse.

But the predominant character of the Aragon-Spanish period was the wealth of the aristocracy, especially of the Spanish nobility, with the continuing spread of the great estates and the poverty of the rural people, who lived on the edge of starvation.

SICILY IN THE EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: 1713-1735

After the end of the Spanish Succession War in 1713, Sicily was a bauble passed between the great ruling houses of Europe. Sicily was given for five years to the ruler of Piedmont-Savoy and then to the Austrian empire and governed from Vienna until 1735, when it was given with Naples to King Charles III (1735-1759), who ruled them until he became King of Spain itself and left them to his third son Ferdinand IV (1759-1825). From that moment on until Garibaldi's arrival in 1860, both Naples and Sicily were governed by this junior branch of the Spanish Bourbon family, and the kingdom was officially called the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

SICILY UNDER THE SPANISH BOURBONS, 1735-1860

Charles III used the Palermo royal palace for one week only and then quickly moved to Naples, where the dynasty stayed until 1861. They lived in the sumptuous Royal Palace overlooking the harbor and built the splendid San Carlo Opera House next to the palace.

Under Charles III and Ferdinand IV, the so-called Enlightened Monarchs, Sicily and Naples enjoyed a brief period of reform. They abolished the Spanish Inquisition, closed a number of monasteries, founded secular schools, and ended slavery. But they were so short of money that

they resorted to selling titles of nobility, including 142 Princes and about three thousand marquises and so on.

Napoleon's armies and fleet were never able to take Sicily, although they did take Naples where they began far-reaching reforms of the autocratic monarchical system. The royal family escaped to Palermo, where they were protected by the British fleet under Nelson. This was, of course, the time when Nelson became the lover of Lady Hamilton, the wife of the British envoy, who was also a good friend of the Sicilian Queen. At times, it looked as though Britain might even annex Sicily as part of its naval control of the Mediterranean; and the Sicilian Queen was said to have offered it to Britain for six million pounds.

After 1815, the economic situation of Sicily worsened, as did resentment at being ruled from Naples, where the monarchy had returned. An uprising began in Palermo in 1829 led by the trade guilds, but the major European powers (except Britain) authorized Austria to send in its army to put down the revolt in a bloodbath. In January of 1848, the very first of that year's numerous revolutions was in Palermo and spread from there to Paris and so on. A liberal parliament was elected, but once again Austria sent its army to restore the rule of the vicious King Ferdinand II (1830-1859) or what British Prime Minister Gladstone called "the negation of God erected into a system of government." The Sicilians held out for almost a year, until the King, now nicknamed King Bomba for his use of artillery to bombard Messina, subdued them.

SICILY IN THE UNITED ITALIAN KINGDOM, 1861-1947

In 1859, however, Piedmont-Sardinia had with the help of French emperor Napoleon III defeated Austria in northern Italy and united Lombardy and then the central Italian states into a new Italian kingdom headed by Piedmont. Since Piedmont's leaders, especially Prime Minister Cavour, had not decided yet whether to try to annex Naples and Sicily, Giuseppe Garibaldi decided to do it himself. Garibaldi was a freelance rebel and revolutionary, born in Nice when it was still Italian. He had fought in different revolutions in South America, and in the uprisings of 1848-1849 in Lombardy and Rome. In spite of the opposition of Cavour, he put together an army called The Thousand as a group of volunteers for the liberation of Sicily, where local revolts had already started. He arrived in Messina where his personal magnetism and the clever planning by local revolutionary leaders swelled his forces to several thousands. At first he avoided direct battle with the large Neapolitan army garrison in Sicily, and as Sicilians in ever greater numbers joined him the Neapolitan commander decided to withdraw without fighting a major battle.

Garibaldi declared himself Dictator on behalf of King Victor Emmanuel and ran Sicily for five months. He promised free land to the peasants, foundation of new villages, damming of rivers, re-forestation of the mountains, building of the first railroad, and vastly improved schools and universities. In reaction, the well-to-do who had been waiting before declaring their allegiance, decided to welcome the King of Piedmont who seemed more conservative than Garibaldi. Garibaldi went on to conquer the Neapolitan mainland. The king himself came all the way down to confront him on the edge of the territory of Naples, where Garibaldi, with great reluctance, handed over his conquests. Garibaldi then retired in fury to a little Italian island in protest at Victor Emanuel's rewarding France for its help in the war with Austria by giving it Nice, Garibaldi's birthplace.

SICILY AFTER ITALIAN UNIFICATION

The Sicilian economic situation as part of united Italy deteriorated, largely because of the policies of the new governments, especially the levying of high tariffs on industrial goods which forced up the price of life in Sicily. The great landowners maintained their huge estates. Beginning from the 1860s they used a sort of private police for control of the peasants, which soon became known as the Mafia. Peasant holdings grew smaller and smaller. The result was more peasant revolt in Sicily itself, especially in the 1870s when they formed *fasci*, armed bands of peasants, miners, and urban workers. In 1892, when their revolts became violent, the prime minister, Crispi, himself a Sicilian landowner, sent in the army, banned the *fasci* and sent the leaders to prison. The result was the beginning of massive Sicilian emigration to the United States and South America, especially to Argentina. Perhaps one quarter of the population emigrated. In 1896 alone, 105,000 people left Sicily.

Then, in 1908, one of the greatest earthquakes in Sicilian history destroyed the whole city of Messina and much of the east coast and in the reconstruction period the mafia extended its foothold, with Catania becoming its major stronghold to this day.

MUSSOLINI AND SICILY

Mussolini made serious, if not too effectual, efforts to control the Mafia. One prefect named Cesare Mori was partly successful, but the mafia were still there waiting to help Allied troops during the invasion of 1943, and thus to

consolidate their position into an almost semi-legal hold. After the invasion, there was a brief, small attempt at a separatist revolt to win Sicilian independence from Italy but it was soon put down by the army and, perhaps, the Mafia. It did, however, lead the politicians in the new Italian state to make Sicily the first region to be given a local parliament.

SICILY SINCE 1945

Sicily's problems at the end of the war were enormous. Migration began again . Some left for Australia at the end of the war. Then with the revival of northern Italy they went north to work in the Fiat factories and other industry in Milan and Turin especially. They also went in large numbers to Germany and especially to the Belgian coal mines. In all probably two million left the Sicily and the Naples region.

The struggle with the Mafia continued. Many magistrates and members of the police worked hard to bring them to justice. In a major trial in 1997, many Mafia leaders were jointly condemned and many given life sentences, often on the testimony of former mafia members who had become *penitenti*. But the mafia fought back, with several prominent assassinations, especially of the Prefect General Carlo Alberto della Chiesa in 1982 and of prosecuting magistrates, of whom the most visible and successful had been Giovanni Falcone , murdered in 1992.

The government made a large effort to deal with the southern economic problems as a whole by founding the Cassa per Il Mezzogiorno. With large funding the Cassa set out to modernize agriculture and build decent farms for the workers. It also began by founding large industrial complexes, often very ugly and bad for the environment, such as the complex at Gela near the Greek temples of the south coast. Private attempts to improve conditions for the poor were spearheaded by Danilo Dolci, a writer and

sociologist, in the 1950s who publicized the conditions in books like (in English) *Poverty in Palermo*, and who started a residential village where the poor could be trained and helped.

The effect of both public and private efforts ,however, was still too little. As late as 2022, Sicily had the highest unemployment rate of all Italy, officially set at 14%. But, in reality , of its population of five million only one million had full-time work.

So that is the present , somewhat depressing, situation of this lovely island. But don't let that deter you from going. Sicily needs you. You can be the most beneficent of all Sicily's invaders.