The End of the "Second Slavery" in the Confederate South and the Great Brigandage in Southern Italy: Some Comparative Suggestions

O fim da "Segunda Escravidão" no Sul Confederado e a grande *Brigantaggio* no Sul da Itália: algumas sugestões comparativas

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Abstract

Between 1861 and 1865, the newly formed Confederate nation and the Kingdom of Italy faced comparable crises of legitimacy, as the South of the former United States and southern Italy underwent the horrific ordeals of the American Civil War and of Italy's "Great Brigandage", also in itself a civil war. Even though on different scales and in different ways, the two civil wars affected relationships between the agrarian elites and their slave and peasant workers, leading to the shattering of the "second slavery" in the Confederate South and to a deep crisis in the landowning socio-economic system of southern Italy. Whereas the Confederate nation did not survive the crisis of legitimacy and collapsed under combined military pressure from the Union and internal opposition, the Kingdom of Italy survived the crisis of legitimacy at the cost of strengthening the government's authoritarian character and of the indiscriminate use of military force.

Resumo

Entre 1861 e 1865, a nova nação Confederada e o Reino da Itália enfrentaram crises comparáveis de legitimidade, na medida em que o Sul dos antigos Estados Unidos da América e o sul da Itália passaram pelas terríveis experiências da Guerra Civil norte-americana e da "Grande Bandidagem" italiana, ela própria uma guerra civil. Mesmo que em escalas distintas e por diferentes caminhos, as duas guerras civis afetaram as relações entre respectivas elites agrárias e trabalhadores rurais escravos e camponeses, conduzindo ao esfacelamento da Segunda Escravidão no Sul Confederado e à profunda crise do sistema socioeconômico do latifúndio do sul da Itália. Mas, enquanto a nação Confederada não sobreviveu à crise de legitimidade, entrando em colapso diante da combinação entre pressão militar da União e oposição interna, o Reino da Itália sobreviveu à crise de legitimidade ao custo do fortalecimento do caráter autoritário do governo e do uso indiscriminado da força militar.

Keywords

American Civil War, Great Brigandage, Confederate States of America, Kingdom of Italy, Second Slavery, Italian *Mezzogiorno*.

Palavras-chave

Guerra Civil Americana, Grande Bandidagem, Estados Confederados da América, Reino da Itália, Segunda Escravidão, *Mezzogiorno* Italiano.

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Methodological Introduction

Current studies on the U.S South have moved increasingly toward an emphasis on comparative and transnational dimensions, leading to a better appreciation of the New World and Atlantic contexts of the rise and fall of American slavery when seen also in its connection with the Old World. In this respect, the best available research at the moment – pioneered particularly by studies by David Brion Davis, Robin Blackburn, Peter Kolchin, Shearer Davis Bowman, Mark Smith, and a few other scholars – focuses increasingly on hemispheric, transnational, and transatlantic perspectives on the American South, when compared not just with Latin America or the Caribbean, but also with Europe within a Euro-American and world context of economic, social, and political transformation, as in the work of Edward Rugemer, Brian Schoen, Sven Beckert, and Timothy Roberts. More importantly, the idea of a "second slavery" – that is, of a new, aggressively capitalist form of enslavement in the U.S. South, Cuba, and Brazil in the nineteenth century, initially argued by Dale Tomich and then proposed also by Michael Zeuske, Anthony Kaye, and others – has done a great deal to open new perspectives of comparison between different, but related, forms of labor exploitation in the New World and Europe.[1]

In respect to the terminal part of the history of American slavery, though, scholarly studies tend to focus on comparisons of the end of the "second slavery" and its aftermath in the U.S. South and in Cuba, as in Rebecca Scott's work, or in the U.S. South and in Brazil, as, for example, in a famous article by William Freehling.[2] Only a few works – first and foremost Steven Hahn's 1990 *AHR* article and Michael L. Bush's seminal synthesis *Servitude in Modern Times* (2000) – have broadened this perspective in order to make comparisons between the end of the "second slavery" in America and of forms of unfree labor in Europe, or else they have focused their analysis specifically on emancipation in the U.S. South and in Russia, as in the case of several of Peter Kolchin's essays.[3] Yet, in order to understand correctly the wider world context in which the end of the "second slavery" in the United States occurred during the Civil War, it would be important to keep in mind – in line with current scholarship – that the American Civil War was essentially a phenomenon of national consolidation similar to, and comparable with, other phenomena that occurred in Europe at the same time, as several scholars have pointed out.[4]

In fact, given these premises, it would make a great deal of sense to compare the American Civil War with a similar epochal phenomenon of national consolidation that affected in its entirety a system of labor in a European country. Therefore, I argue that we will be able to understand better the nature and meaning of the American Civil War and the end of the "second slavery" in the United States if we place them clearly within a Euro-American context. Specifically, I intend to do so by comparing the Civil War and Emancipation in the U.S. South with a particular and contemporaneous military and socio-political European movement of national unification – the making of the Italian Kingdom during the *Risorgimento* – and the subsequent five-year period of civil war known as "Great Brigandage" in the Italian *Mezzogiorno*.

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See especially DAVIS, David Brion. *Inhuman Bondage*: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006; BLACKBURN, Robin. *The American Crucible*: Slavery, Emancipation, and Human Rights. London: Verso, 2011; KOLCHIN, Peter. *Unfree Labor*: American Slavery and Russian Serfdom. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987; BOWMAN, Shearer Davis. *Masters and Lords:* Mid-Nineteenth Century Prussian Junkers and U.S. Planters. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993; SMITH, Mark. Old South Time in Comparative Perspective. *American Historical Review*, n.101, p.1432-1469, 1996; RUGEMER, Edward. *The Problem of Emancipation*: The Caribbean Origins of the Civil War. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008; SCHOEN, Brian. *The Fragile Fabric of Union*: Cotton, Federal Politics, and the Global Origins of the Civil War. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009; BECKERT, Sven. Emancipation and Empire: Reconstructing the World Wide Web of Cotton Production in the Age of the American Civil War. *American Historical Review*, n.109, p.1405-1438, 2004; ROBERTS, Timothy. *Distant Revolutions*: 1848 and the Challenge to American Exceptionalism. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009; TOMICH, Dale. *Through the Prism of Slavery:* Labor, Capital, and the World Economy. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004. p.56-74; TOMICH, Dale and ZEUSKE, Michael. Introduction, The Second Slavery: Mass Slavery, World-Economy, and Comparative Microhistories. *Review*, n.31, p.91-100, 2008; and KAYE, Anthony. The Second Slavery: Modernity in the Nineteenth-Century South and the Atlantic World. *Journal of Southern History*, n.75, p.627-650, 2009.

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SCOTT, Rebecca. *Degrees of Freedom:* Louisiana and Cuba after Slavery. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005; FREEHLING, William. *The Reintegration of American History*: Slavery and the Civil War. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994. p.176-219.

3
See HAHN, Steven. Class and State in Postemancipation Societies: Southern Planters in Comparative Perspective. *American Historical Review* n.95, p.75-98, 1990; BUSH, Michael L. *Servitude in Modern Times*. Cambridge: Polity, 2000; and particularly KOLCHIN, Peter. Some controversial questions concerning nineteenth-century abolition from slavery and serfdom. In: BUSH, Michael L. (org.). *Slavery and Serfdom:* Studies in Legal Bondage. London: Longman, 1996. p.42-68.

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See especially BENDER, Thomas. *A Nation among Nations*: America´s place in World History. New York: Hill and Wang, 2006; GUARNERI, Carl J. *America in the World:* United States History in Global Context. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007; and TYRRELL, Ian. *Transnational Nation*. United States History in Global Perspective since 1789. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Agrarian Elites in the U.S. South and the Italian Mezzogiorno, 1815-1860: A Brief Comparison

The point of departure of the present investigation is the recognition that, in different ways, the American South and the Italian *Mezzogiorno* played key roles in the formation of American and Italian national identities. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, through the crucial decade of the 1860s and beyond, these two souths – both peripheral agricultural areas within a nineteenth-century world economy centered upon industrialized England and the industrializing northeastern United States – expressed particular regional cultures.[5] The foundations of these regional cultures lay in specific socio-economic systems – based, in one case, on slaveholding and, in the other case, on landowning – while the regions' political influence went far beyond their borders and affected the development of the nations of which they were, or became, part. Within the two southern regions, between 1815 and 1860, agrarian elites – American slaveholders and southern Italian landowners – played key roles, specifically in socio-economic terms, by presiding over the production and movement of valuable agricultural commodities and by exploiting large masses of mostly landless laborers – American slaves and southern Italian peasants – although in very different ways and degrees.[6]

In short, even though in command of very different agricultural systems – one mostly characterized by centuries-old *latifondi*, while the other one comprising mostly recent plantations – both American slaveholders and southern Italian landowners in the first half of the nineteenth century confronted themselves with the forces of economic modernization, unleashed in one case by America's "market revolution" and in the other case by Italy's "commercial revolution". Both these movements toward economic modernization were products of a general restructuring of the world economy consequent to the long wave of England's Industrial Revolution – a restructuring that, in the U.S. South, Cuba, and Brazil, led to the rise of the "second slavery", while in Russia it led to a renewal of the "second serfdom". In practice, in both the American and the Italian cases, economic modernization prompted by the restructuring of the world economy affected the agrarian elites by leading to a general strengthening of their more recently formed sections, the U.S. cotton planters and Italy's bourgeois landowners, while it also led to a flourishing of agronomic activities by resident slaveholders and landowners.[7]

As the nineteenth century reached the end of its first half, though, and the two elites grew in power and influence, strains in their relationship with their respective national governments – the American Union and the Bourbon Kingdom of the Two Sicilies – started to increase in intensity, eventually leading to open confrontation in both cases in two particular instances: in the American case, in the 1819-21 Missouri Crisis and in the 1848-50 sectional conflict over slavery, while, in the southern Italian case, in the 1820-21 and in the 1848-49 Revolutions. Though the two national governments survived the crisis, the power the elites accumulated, which reflected in their prominent roles in the social and political life of their local communities, led to their increasingly harsher resistance to the centralizing policies of those governments and to the governments' perceived attempts to threaten established traditions of local autonomy, in one case through the imposition of anti-slavery measures, while in the

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See WALLERSTEIN, Immanuel. *The Capitalist World-Economy.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979, p.1-36; and Idem. The Modern World-System. Vol.IV: Centrist Liberalism Triumphant, 1789-1914. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011.

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See DAL LAGO, Enrico. *Agrarian Elites*: American Slaveholders and Southern Italian Landowners, 1815-1861. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005. p.28-96. See also SCARBOROUGH, William. *Masters of the Big House*: Elite Planters in the Nineteenth-Century South. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003; FOLLETT, Richard. *The Sugar Masters*: Planters and Slave in Louisiana's Cane World, 1820-1860. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005; LUPO, Salvatore. I proprietari terrieri del Mezzogiorno. In: BEVILACQUA, Piero (org.). *Storia dell'agricoltura italiana in età moderna e contemporanea.* Vol.II: Uomini e Classi. Venice: Marsilio, 1990. p.105-150; and PETRUSEWICZ, Marta. *Latifundium*: Moral Economy and Material Life in a Nineteenth-Century Periphery. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996.

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See DAL LAGO, Enrico. Agrarian Elites, Op. Cit., p.98-179. On "second slavery" and "second serfdom", see especially TOMICH, Dale. Through the Prism of Slavery, Op. Cit.; TOMICH, Dale and ZEUSKE, Michael. Introduction, The Second Slavery, Op. Cit., p.91-100; and DAL LAGO, Enrico. *American Slavery, Atlantic Slavery, and Beyond*: The U.S. "Peculiar Institution" in International Perspective. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2012. p.95-122.

other case through the imposition of a strongly centralized administrative system. After 1850, therefore, in both the United States and southern Italy, the political confrontation between the agrarian elites and the national government escalated in intensity, with two regions in particular – South Carolina and Sicily – taking the lead of the two movements of opposition to the American Union and to the Bourbon Kingdom.[8]

Agrarian Elites, Nation-Building and Civil War in the Two Souths, 1860-1862

The two parallel processes of confrontation between peripheral elites and centralizing national governments reached their peak in both cases in the years 1860-61, when, in extreme attempts to protect their regional autonomy, the two elites detached themselves entirely from the politics of the American Union and of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, leading in one case to the American slaveholders' creation of the Confederate States of America and in the other case to the southern Italian landowners' support for Italian Unification. Essentially, in the American case, slaveholders achieved their ultimate aim of nationalization of slavery by creating a nation (the C.S.A.) entirely dedicated to the protection of the "peculiar institution", while in the Italian case, southern Italian landowners achieved the ultimate aim of creating a government (the Kingdom of Italy) that protected their interests. Yet, in the course of the following five years – between 1861 and 1865 – the two newly formed nations faced comparable crises of legitimacy. These crises related to both internal and external factors. In the case of the Confederacy, internationally, the problem of legitimacy derived from the fact that the Union was the only recognized national government in America, while, internally, the elites and ordinary citizens of the South were divided both between supporters of the Union and supporters of the Confederacy and also between supporters of a strong central government and supporters of states' rights and local autonomy. In the case of the Kingdom of Italy, internationally, the problem of legitimacy derived from the overthrow of the Bourbon Kingdom perpetrated by the Piedmontese government without a formal declaration of war, while, internally, the southern Italian landowning elites and the southern people were divided between supporters of Italy and of the Savoy dynasty and supporters of the Bourbons. Both in the case of the Confederacy and in the case of the Italian Kingdom, those members of the southern elites, and also those ordinary citizens, who rejected the new nation, for different reasons, were initially a minority; yet, in both cases, the minority grew in size and influence in the course of the first half of the 1860s.

In America, in the months that passed between the secession of South Carolina on 20 December 1860 and the fall of Fort Sumter on 14 April 1861, all southerners confronted a choice between remaining loyal to the Union, or else embracing Secession and the making of a new nation. As we know, eleven states in the lower and upper South decided to secede and formed the Confederate States of America, while five border states, plus the newly formed West Virginia, remained in the Union. If it is true, though, that the reasons why the border states in the South remained loyal to the Union had a great deal to do with Abraham Lincoln's diplomacy, pressures, and anti-libertarian policies there, it is also true, as William Freehling has shown in *The South vs. the South* (2001), that the divided loyalties of those southerners had a heavier influence than we

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See DAL LAGO, Agrarian Elites, Op. Cit., p.180-270. See also, within the very vast bibliography, FREEHLING, William. *The Road to Disunion.* 2 Vols. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990-2007; BONNER, Robert. *Mastering America*: Southern Slaveholders and the Crisis of the Union. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009; SPAGNOLETTI, Angelantonio. *Storia del Regno delle Due Sicilie*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997; and DAVIS, John A. *Naples and Napoleon*: Southern Italy and the European Revolutions, 1790-1860. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

once thought on the course of the Civil War. But Union sympathizers and anti-Confederate activists were hardly confined to those states in the South. As Paul Escott has recently pointed out, on one hand, "as the war began, only a few pockets of Unionism remained in the Lower South"; on the other hand, in the Upper South, at the very heart of the Confederacy, "in Richmond itself, pro-Union sentiment, written in chalk, had appeared on walls a few days after [Jefferson] Davis's inauguration" on 18 February 1861 – what had prompted the newly inaugurated president, no differently from Lincoln, to enforce anti-libertarian policies to ensure anti-national sentiment would not spread. Yet, despite Jefferson's and the Confederate government's efforts to dispel disloyalty, pro-Union and anti-Confederate sentiment continued to exist in several areas of the Confederacy, first and foremost in the upcountry and mountainous areas – traditionally the home of fiercely independent non-slaveholding yeomen, who resented the planters and the slave system that guaranteed the latter's wealth.[9]

In the first year of the war, and until late 1862, the Confederacy showed that it was able to remain independent and, through a series of important victories, it convinced the Union government that the war for bringing back the seceded states would be long and costly. Also as a result of these initial Confederate successes, pro-Union activities and anti-Confederate sentiments within the Confederacy maintained for a while a relatively low profile, though in certain areas especially of North Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama, loyalties were so divided that the Governors had to take fairly severe measures against either open boycotting of the Confederate government, or secret Unionist organizations, and even formation of Unionist militias. In other words, in 1861-62, anti-Confederate and Unionist forces were organizing themselves; at these early stages, they took advantage of the Union's invasion in regions of Virginia, Tennessee, and, above all, Louisiana, where New Orleans was occupied from May 1862. In addition, after the enforcement of the Conscription Act of 16 April 1862, a number of disaffected young southerners – essentially yeomen who resented the planter class' exemption from military service – and deserters joined the ranks of the Unionists. By later in the same year, after the Union inflicted a resounding victory on the Confederacy at the battle of Antietam on 17 September 1862, Unionist activities – representing a combination of both political and social reasons for anti-Confederate sentiment – had gone out of control and had generated miniature civil wars with the Confederate authorities in a number of areas. In fact, by then, as Stephanie McCurry has recently written, particularly "in Jones County, Mississippi, and in Western and Central North Carolina, East Tennessee, northern Alabama, Florida, and everywhere desertion reached militarily threatening proportion, the Confederate States waged war against its domestic enemies and they did not spare women." The Confederate South's inner civil war, fought within the context of the wider Civil War, though, was about to get worse as a result of Lincoln's *Emancipation Proclamation*.[10]

The year that South Carolina secede from the Union, 1860, was a crucial year also for the Italian *Mezzogiorno*. In that year, the process of Italian national unification accelerated dramatically its pace when Giuseppe Garibaldi and his Red Shirts led an expedition from the North to the South, which resulted, eventually, in the collapse of the Bourbon Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, and in the later annexation of all the southern territory to the northern-based Kingdom of Sardinia, ruled by the House of

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ESCOTT, Paul D. *The Confederacy*: The Slaveholders' Failed Venture. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2010. p.14 e p.31; FREEHLING, William W. *The South vs. the South*: How Anti-Confederate Southerners Shaped the Course of the Civil War. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. See also ESCOTT, Paul D. *After Secession*: Jefferson Davis and the Failure of Confederate Nationalism. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978; and SHEEHAN-DEAN, Aaron. *Why Confederates Fought*: Family and Nation in Civil War Virginia. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

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MCCURRY, Stephanie. *Confederate Reckoning*: Power and Politics in the Civil War South. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010. p.117. See also WILLIAMS, David. *Bitterly Divided:* The South's Inner Civil War. New York: New Press, 2010; and INSCOE, John C. and KENZER, Robert (orgs.). *Enemies of the Country:* New Perspectives on Unionists in the Civil War South. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

Savoy. Whilst supported by the majority of the southern Italian landowners, the annexation was not, in all likelihood, welcomed by a large number of the peasant population. Opposition to Garibaldi had already led to his repression of peasant activities during his expedition, culminating in the famous episode of Bronte, where, on 2 August 1860, Garibaldi's lieutenant Nino Bixio ordered the shooting of five peasant rebels who had taken possession of the town defying the landed proprietors. After the annexation of the *Mezzogiorno* to the Kingdom of Sardinia, decreed by dubiously held plebiscites on 21 October 1860, peasant activity against the process of Italian national unification increased in size and spread. It quickly found a powerful ally in the legitimist circles, which wished to put back on his southern throne the young Bourbon King Francis II. On 5 September, just two days before the arrival of Garibaldi in the capital Naples, Francis II had decided to abandon the royal palace to spare the city – in the words of Roberto Martucci – "from the horrors of war", and to take refuge in the fortress of Gaeta, from where he had begun organizing the counteroffensive. On 1 October, near the Volturno river, in Campania, ca. 30,000 Bourbon soldiers clashed against 20,000 of Garibaldi's troops and were defeated, leaving many dead and prisoners behind. Starting from that moment, while Francis II was under siege in Gaeta, the remaining Bourbon soldiers and the rebel peasants engaged in a large-scale guerrilla warfare with the purpose of undoing Italian unification.[11]

After Gaeta fell, Francis II and his court fled to Rome, from where, under the protection of Pope Pius IX, they attempted to organize the guerrilla warfare against the Italian government in the *Mezzogiorno*. Therefore, as the Kingdom of Italy was proclaimed in Turin in March 1861, the *Mezzogiorno* was caught in the middle of an inner civil war – comparable to the Confederate South's inner civil war – between the pro-Bourbon forces on one side and the Italian troops on the other side. From the ideological point of view, the key was in the fact that the overthrowing of the Bourbon dynasty had been perpetrated by the Kingdom of Sardinia without a formal declaration of war, and effectively there was little legitimacy involved in the process of formation of the Italian Kingdom. As a result, those who sided with the Bourbons considered themselves "legitimists" aiming at restoring Francis II in his rightful place. Several of them came from abroad to help, and, among them, the most famous and talented was Spanish officer José Borjés. A former commander of Carlist forces in Spain, Borjés was an expert in guerrilla operations and the ideal candidate for the overall command of the pro-Bourbon forces of the anti-Italian movement, according to Francis II's advisers. On 14 September 1861, Borjés landed in Calabria, where he joined the legendary head of the largest of a number of peasant bands of brigands – Carmine Donatelli, called Crocco, the anointed leader of his 1,500 men. Together, for several months, they fought against the Italian state conquering village after village from the Italian army between the regions of Campania and Lucania, until when Crocco parted from Borjés, not wanting to move on the city of Potenza, one of the largest in the area. Left without an army, Borjés attempted to reach the Papal State, but was captured and shot by the Italian troops without a trial on 8 December 1861.[12]

In 1860-61, thus, two comparable projects of creation of nations were supported by most American slaveholders in the U.S. South and

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MARTUCCI, Roberto. *L'invenzione dell'Italia unita, 1855-1864.* Florence: Sansoni, 1999. p.189. See also CANDELORO, Giorgio. *Storia dell'Italia moderna.* Vol.5: Dalla rivoluzione nazionale all'Unità (1849-1860). Milan: Feltrinelli, 1964; and RIALL, Lucy. *Sicily and the Unification of Italy, 1859-1866.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

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DI FIORE, Gigi. *Controstoria dell'Unità d'Italia.* Fatti e misfatti del Risorgimento. Milan: Rizzoli, 2007. p.199-201. See also SCIROCCO, Alfonso. *Il Mezzogiorno nella crisi dell'unificazione (1860-1861).* Naples: ESI, 1981; and AMORE, Fulvio. *Uccidete José Borjés:* l'ordine dei Piemontesi durante la conquista del Sud. Il racconto di un'infamia (1860-1862). Naples: Controcorrente, 2010.

by southern Italian landowners in the *Mezzogiorno*: the creation of the Confederates States of America, and the creation of the Kingdom of Italy. Almost immediately after their birth, both nations faced, in different ways, crises of legitimacy. In both cases, the crisis related to a combination of internal problems and external influences, and it was this powerful combination that led to the explosion of movements opposed to the two new nations in the form, in both cases, of guerrilla warfare fought in particular areas – especially Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, and North Carolina in the Confederacy, and Campania, Lucania, and Apulia in southern Italy – and aimed at destabilizing the new government's authority and re-establishing the old one, be it the American Union or the Bourbon Kingdom. Essentially, in both cases, the anti-national movement was both political and social, aiming at the same time also to settle grievances held by less privileged sections of the populations against those among the two agrarian elites who continued to support the new nations because they benefited the most from them. Also in both cases, though for very different reasons, in 1862 the crisis of legitimacy reached a point of no return. It was not going to be long, though, before both anti-national movements would be joined by activities on a larger scale initiated and carried on by the agrarian masses of the two southern regions for different, but comparable, social, and in a sense also political, reasons.

American Slaves, Southern Italian Peasants, Civil War, and Social Revolution, 1862-1865

Within the context of the two crises of legitimacy that the newly formed national governments in the Confederate South and in the Italian *Mezzogiorno* were forced to face, an essential component was represented by the numerous and widespread episodes of unrest caused by the agrarian masses during the horrific ordeals of the American Civil War and of Italy's "Great Brigandage". Even though on a different scale and in different ways, as a result of its duration and geographical extension, agrarian unrest ended up in both cases being much more than a simple military event, and affected deeply the course of the Confederate South's and Italian *Mezzogiorno*'s inner civil wars, transforming the entire social structure of the two regions, particularly relationships between the agrarian elites and their slave and peasant labourers. In turn, the agrarian labourers' insurrectionary activities led to the consequent shattering of the system of labor related to the "second slavery" in the Confederate South and to the weakening of the landowning socio-economic system of the Italian *Mezzogiorno*.

Clearly, though, the labourers' revolts assumed very different aspects in the two southern regions, especially because of the crucial contribution of the Union Army to the slaves' insurrection in the Confederate South, which stood in stark opposition to the solitary fight carried on by southern Italian peasants after the defeat of the pro-Bourbon forces. In this respect, it is interesting to notice that, in the United States, at least some of the current debates on the slaves' contribution to the making of their own freedom during the Civil War revolves around the question of whether it is possible to say that there was a massive slave rebellion in the Confederate South, independently from the issue of the Union Government's and Army's roles in freeing the slaves. Conversely, in the Italian *Mezzogiorno*, the issue at stake is whether it is possible to say that the peasant rebellion

witnessed during the "Great Brigandage" was, for all intents and purposes, a civil war. In both cases, the conditions that are under scrutiny are the scale, duration, and intensity, together with the modalities, of still relatively little-known phenomena – the American slaves' insurrectionary activities and the southern Italian peasants' civil war. Those conditions, in fact, for the most part, still await painstaking investigation before a final word can be said on the above issues.

In the Confederate South, slaves had already started acting from the very beginning of the Civil War, mostly by fleeing to Union camps, especially in the areas bordering the Union lines, such as Virginia and Tennessee, and in those areas where the Union had made its first territorial gains, such as the Sea Islands of South Carolina, occupied from as early as November 1861, and lower Louisiana, from May 1862. The massive scale of the phenomenon of slaves fleeing to Union camps, in turn, had forced Lincoln to find at least a temporary solution vis-à-vis their legal status, and led Congress to pass a *First Confiscation Act* in August 1861, which called for the seizure of all rebel property, including the slaves, who, by this time, began to be called "contrabands of war". Then, in July 1862, a *Second Confiscation Act* stated that all the slaves of Confederate masters were to be considered free. Finally, in September 1862, after the Union's victory at Antietam, Lincoln drafted the *Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation,* whose definitive version became the official *Emancipation Proclamation* on 1 January 1863. Justified by Lincoln as a war measure, the *Emancipation Proclamation* declared immediately, "thenceforward and forever free" all the slaves in areas under Confederate control, gave legal backing to the slaves' efforts to free themselves, and provided the Union Army with the legal power to help them in their self-liberating struggle. With the release of the *Emancipation Proclamation*, the South's inner civil war between Confederate authorities and anti-Confederate forces entered a new phase, as the slaves became now fully recognized main actors in their anti-Confederate struggle.[13]

By 1863, though, the inner civil war within the white South had increased in motivation and intensity. On one hand, riots were exploding in all the major cities, first and foremost Richmond, as the fear of starvation gripped the people whose supplies were rerouted to Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. On the other hand, in the wildest areas of North Carolina, Florida, and Mississippi, where an ever increasing number of Unionists and deserters found their refuge, the fight kept occupied the local Confederate authorities for many months, and, in the case of the so-called "Free State of Jones" in eastern Mississippi, it came close to generate a secessionist movement from the Confederacy. Though unrelated, the slaves' own struggle for freedom inserted itself within this picture of a Confederacy that was faltering under the weight of representing a nation that was both elitist and unprepared for an industrial type of war. Ultimately, then, through their insurrectionary activities, the slaves unmasked the contradiction of a nation that fought for its own freedom, but also for the freedom to keep African Americans enslaved. Slaves had resisted this notion from the very beginning of the war, and, in fact, already starting from 1861, rumors of imminent slave insurrection had been heard in different places in the South – as in the famous case of slave conspiracy investigated by Winthrop Jordan in Adams County, Mississippi.[14]

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LINCOLN, Abraham. The Emancipation Proclamation (1863). In: HALPERN, Rick and DAL LAGO, Enrico (orgs.). *Slavery and Emancipation*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2002. p.380. See also BERLIN, Ira et al. *Slaves No More*: Three Essays on Emancipation and the Civil War. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992. p.1-76; GERTEIS, Louis. Slaves, Servants, and Soldiers: Uneven Paths to Freedom in the Border States, 1861-1865. In: BLAIR, William A. and YOUNGER, Karen Fischer (orgs.). *Lincoln's proclamation; Emancipation Reconsidered*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009. p.170-194; and FONER, Eric. *The Fiery Trial:* Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery. New York: Norton, 2010. p.166-206.

14
See especially BYNUM, Victoria. *The Long Shadow of the Civil War*: Southern Dissent and its Legacies. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010; BYNUM, Victoria. *The Free State of Jones:* Mississippi's Longest Civil War. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002; and JORDAN, Winthrop. *Tumult and Silence at Second Creek:* An Inquiry into a Civil War Slave Conspiracy. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995.

More generally, as Peter Kolchin has noted, throughout the Confederacy, slaves "worked less, questioned more, and increasingly took to running away, not only singly or in pairs, as had been common before the war, but in large groups as well". By 1863, as Emancipation was proclaimed, and the Union Army, now invested with the legal power of an agent of liberation, came increasingly closer to the heart of the Confederacy, triumphing at Vicksburg as well as shattering Lee's hopes at Gettysburg, the situation rapidly deteriorated beyond repair in many areas, first and foremost those regions where the local masters had left for the front, as James Henry Hammond's 30 August 1863 observations about the behavior of his slaves at Silver Bluff, South Carolina, prove: "Negroes... stealing right and left... Frank my driver escaped today and ran away". Hundreds of thousands of episodes similar to this must have happened, with massive numbers of slaves turning up in Union camps, and eventually, with many of them – close to 200,000 by the end of the war – donning the Union blue uniform. But there was more to the slaves' resistance than simply running away and perhaps joining the Union Army.[15]

In his work, Steven Hahn has shown how, even before the war, slaves used mutual solidarity and kinship networks to build traditions of informal political activity through which they put up effective means of resistance to their masters' pretensions to exploit them. During the war, these relationships of mutual solidarity and these kinship networks were instrumental in creating the preconditions for a variety of rebellious acts, of which running away was one among many – from stealing the masters' property, all the way to setting up massive conspiracies – that went into the direction of disrupting the slave system as a whole. In this sense, emancipation, when it came, acted as a catalyst for a number of rebellious acts that now found a logical conclusion. More than thirty years ago, Leon Litwack wrote in *Been in the Storm So Long* (1979) that "the extent of black insurrectionary activity during the Civil War remains a subtle question." Thirty years later, Steven Hahn, in *The Political Worlds of Slavery and* Freedom (2008), asked himself if, by not acknowledging the massive – even though diverse and unconnected – number of rebellious acts in the same collective way as we acknowledge the slaves rebellious acts in the Haitian Revolution, we might have missed the largest slave rebellion that ever occurred, during the American Civil War.[16] In this respect, perhaps, it would be also interesting to ask if it is possible to compare the scope, scale, and significance of the slave rebellion in Haiti for the end of the "first slavery" in the 1790s with the scope, scale, and significance of the slave rebellion in the Confederate South for the end of the "second slavery".

Though Hahn has been harshly criticized by some scholars, none the least because he seemingly downplayed the crucial role of the Union government and of the Union Army as agents of emancipation – a condition that made things radically different from the Haitian case – there is still much to be said for encouraging researchers to investigate better and deeper the slaves' multiform acts of rebellion in a number of localities within the Confederate South, particularly from 1863 onwards, and in giving these acts more significance than it has been often the case. In this sense, Stephanie McCurry's recent *Confederate Reckoning* (2010) has gone some way in this direction – and, significantly, in her treatment, connections and comparisons with Haiti have a special place. However, McCurry's work really aspired to be a synthesis with a few exemplary case-studies,

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KOLCHIN, Peter. Slavery and Freedom in the Civil War South. In: MCPHERSON, James and COOPER, William J. (orgs.). *Writing the Civil War:* The Quest to Understand. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998. p.245; James Henry Hammond's quotation is in BLESER, Carol (org.). *Secret and Sacred:* The Diaries of James Henry Hammond, a Southern Slaveholder. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981. p.297.

16
LITWACK, Leon F. *Been in the Storm So Long*: The Aftermath of Slavery. New York: Knopf, 1979. p.46. See also HAHN, Steven. *A Nation under our Feet*: Black Political Struggle in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003. p.62-115; and HAHN, Steven. *The Political Worlds of Slavery and Freedom.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009. p.55-114.

which could do a great deal to prove the point that a massive slave rebellion did take place in the Confederate South during the Civil War. Yet, much more research still needs to be done on this topic at the local level in several different regions and states before we can conclusively say whether this was, indeed, the case or not, or whether, perhaps, it is all just a matter of definitions and interpretations.[17]

17
See MCCURRY, Stephanie. Confederate Reckoning, Op. Cit., p.239-262.

Comparably to what happened in the Confederate South, also in the Italian *Mezzogiorno* the struggle between nationalist and counter-nationalist forces entered a new phase in 1862. In fact, by 1862, with Josè Borjés' death, the legitimist phase of the anti-Italian struggle in the *Mezzogiorno* was over; the peasants and brigands who collaborated with the pro-Bourbon forces would now fight their own war on their own terms with the Italian state. The conflict, called "Great Brigandage", would be the first terrible, costly civil war in unified Italy, it would last four long years until 1865 – therefore overlapping with the American Civil War – and it would become increasingly brutal and inhuman. Crocco's life represents well the parable of those who, whether peasants or former Bourbon soldiers, began their anti-Italian activities in the aftermath of Garibaldi's expedition. Like Crocco, they were initially convinced that Italian unification would have brought about a more democratic form of government. Then, disillusioned, they joined the legitimist forces to restore a Bourbon King who, with all his faults, was not a Piedmontese conqueror, and finally they threw all their efforts behind the attempt to rid of the new Italian state, which, for them, represented little more than heavy taxes, forced conscription, and the very expression of the power of the landowners who oppressed them; in Crocco's own words "the exploited poor answered 'also our time has come'".[18]

18
Crocco's quotation is in CUTRUFELLI, Maria Rosa. *L'Unità d'Italia.* Guerra contadina e nascita del sottosviluppo nel Sud. Verona: Bertani, 1974. p.259.

The Italian state responded to the inner civil war that had erupted in the *Mezzogiorno* sending an army that, by 1862, was already 50,000 strong, and by the end of the conflict would count more than 100,000 men. The enormous scale of the phenomenon and the ability of the brigands, who by then had formed hundreds of bands, all practicing very effective and brutal forms of guerrilla warfare, managed to keep the Italian Army in check, and ultimately forced the Parliament, whose members, for the most part, had no other intention than repressing the southern population, to promulgate special laws. Thus, in October 1863, the infamous Pica Law was passed and would be enforced for the next two years. It gave military authorities the power to maintain martial law in all the *Mezzogiorno* provinces – particularly Campania, Lucania, and Capitanata – where brigandage was present, leading to countless atrocities, massacres, and executions of not just brigands, but also of a large number of civilians suspected of harbouring outlaws. The final death count, according to the official documents, was of 5,212 killed; however, recently Roberto Martucci has pointed out that the number must have been much higher, especially if we count also the civilians, and he proposes a number "between 18,250 and 54,750 shot or killed in other ways (suppressed, burned alive, etc.)" – a much more realistic and, sadly, extremely high figure, which reminds us that too many people died and were forgotten in the inner civil war fought in the Italian *Mezzogiorno.*[19]

19
MARTUCCI, Roberto. L'invenzione dell'Italia unita, Op. Cit., p.314. See also MOLFESE, Franco. *Storia del brigantaggio dopo l'Unità.* Milan: Feltrinelli, 1964; DICKIE, John. A Word at War: The Italian Army and Brigandage, 1860-1870. *History Workshop Journal*, n.33, p.1-24, 1992; and ADORNI, Daniela. Il brigantaggio. In: VIOLANTE, Luciano (org.). *Storia d'Italia*, Annali 12: La criminalità. Turin: Einaudi, 1996. p.283-319.

Similarly to what happened in regards to the slaves' actions in the Confederate South during the Civil War, in interpreting the "Great Brigandage", since the 1860s, scholars and intellectuals have divided between

different views. On one hand, some of them have emphasized the political aspirations of pro-Bourbon supporters and have erroneously interpreted the popular insurgence only as part of a general legitimist upheaval, while, on the other hand, others have emphasized the social dimensions of the phenomenon, somewhat narrowly interpreting it simply as an example of class warfare carried on by the dispossessed masses and brutally criminalized and repressed by the new Italian state. From the 1980s, a third interpretation has also come to the fore – one that has emphasized, instead, a postcolonial view of the phenomenon, shedding light particularly on the importance of hitherto mostly hidden racial prejudices by northern soldiers and civil servants against southerners. However, the increasingly accepted interpretation by a number of recent historians – among whom particularly Salvatore Lupo, John Davis, Roberto Martucci, and Gigi Di Fiore – is that the "Great Brigandage" was first and foremost an episode that, in the words of Salvatore Lupo, "assumed more clearly the character of a civil war... because the conflict concerned only Italians".[20]

Therefore, the civil war at the heart of the "Great Brigandage" of 1861-65 in the Italian *Mezzogiorno* was essentially a mass phenomenon of armed peasant revolt against first and foremost the Italian government and those landowners who supported it, but it had also an important political component in the legitimist attempt to restore Bourbon King Francis II. At the same time, though, it is also important to remember that, for the liberal elite that governed Italy, an equally dangerous political dimension was represented by Garibaldi's 1862 expedition through the South – an attempt to revive the fortunes of the Democratic Party through the envisioned conquest of Rome. Garibaldi was eventually halted at Aspromonte in Calabria and forced to retire, but the possibility that the southern masses might have followed him, this time against the Italian monarchy, had been a very real one. In both cases, the legitimist and the democratic attempts, the newly formed Italian state ran the risk of witnessing a secession of the *Mezzogiorno* from the rest of the country, in a scenario reminding one of the Confederacy's secession in the American Civil War, and there is little doubt that the shrewdest members of the Italian government, well informed about contemporary events in the United States, were very well aware of this.[21]

In both the Confederate South and the Italian *Mezzogiorno*, thus, from the point of view of the agrarian masses, the renewed conflict between the governmental centre and the peripheral elites from 1861 onwards represented a perfect opportunity to seize in order to change their condition of exploitation. Therefore, comparably to African American slaves in the Confederate South during the American Civil War, the agrarian masses in the Italian *Mezzogiorno* during the "Great Brigandage" rose spontaneously to improve their lot and end their exploitation, but at the same time joined the political and military initiatives of those governmental forces – be they the Union soldiers or the Bourbon supporters – that fought against their oppressors. In both cases, it is clear that they did this out of convenience more than for any other reason. In the American Civil War, runaway slaves joined the Union Army in increasing numbers in the latter part of the conflict, after Emancipation had been granted and the war had finally become a war for liberation, while at the time of the southern Italian "Great Brigandage", peasants joined the pro-Bourbon forces only until their aim was the same one of overthrowing Italian authority. In reality, from the beginning, African American slaves

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LUPO, Salvatore. *Il passato del nostro presente*. Il lungo ottocento, 1776-1913. Rome: Laterza, 2010. p.107. See also especially Idem. L'unificazione italiana. Mezzogiorno, rivoluzione, guerra civile. Rome: Laterza, 2011; Idem. Il Grande Brigantaggio. Interpretazione e memoria di una guera civile. In: BARBERIS, Walter (org.). *Storia d'Italia*, Annali 18: Guerra e Pace. Turin: Einaudi, 2002. p.465-504; and DAVIS, John A. Le guerre del brigantaggio. In: ISNENGHI, Mario and CECCHINATO, Eva (orgs.). *Fare l'Italia*. Unità e disunità nel Risorgimento. Turin: UTET, 2008. p.738-752.

21
See MERIGGI, Marco. Dopo l'Unità. Forme e ambivalenza del legittimismo borbonico. *Passato e Presente*, n.29, p.39-56, 2011; and SCIROCCO, Alfonso. *Giuseppe Garibaldi*. Battaglie, amori, ideali di un cittadino del mondo. Rome: Laterza, 2001. p.293-295.

and southern Italian peasants thought and acted with a mind of their own, and with the objectives of freeing themselves from their masters in one case and freeing themselves from the landowners in the other case. In acting on these premises, African American slaves engaged in a variety of rebellious acts that, collectively, might very well one day prove to have been the equivalent of a massive slave insurrection – which, at the very least, gave a substantial contribution to the end of the "second slavery" in the Confederate South – while southern Italian peasants kept the Italian army engaged in what can only be called a civil war.[22]

22
On some of these issues, see DAL LAGO, Enrico. States of Rebellion: Civil War, Rural Unrest, and the Agrarian Question in the American South and the Italian *Mezzogiorno*, 1861-1865. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, n.47, p.403-432, 2005.

Conclusion

In 1865, whereas the Confederacy did not survive the crisis of legitimacy and collapsed, together with the southern slaveholding system based on the "second slavery", under the combined military pressure from the Union and the internal opposition of increasingly larger numbers among the elites and ordinary citizens, the Kingdom of Italy survived the crisis of legitimacy at the cost of strengthening the government's authoritarian character and of the indiscriminate use of military force – both of which led to opposition by large strata of the southern Italian population. By 1865, therefore, two different, but comparable, processes had taken place leading to the consolidation of the United States and Italy. In these parallel processes of national consolidation, the two southern regions had played fundamental roles, since, in both regions, the different social strata had contributed in determinant, though different, ways in accelerating the movement toward the creation of a free and integrated American nation-state and an integrated Italian nation-state – creations that, in both cases, we should see as reactions to threats posed by both centrifugal politics and internal social upheavals.

As a result, on one hand, the political actions of both southern elites ended up creating a renewed tradition of opposition to the national governments. On the other hand, while in the American South the slaves' rebellion in the wake of Emancipation was politically neutralized through its absorption into a legitimate war of liberation fought for the nationalization of freedom on the side of the Union, in the Italian *Mezzogiorno* the massive peasant revolt termed "Great Brigandage" was repressed militarily in the harshest possible way. Then, after 1865, while the revolts' aftermaths did not lead to all the changes American slaves and southern Italian peasants had hoped for – remaining, therefore, "unfinished revolutions", to paraphrase Eric Foner[23] – the situation that both the elites of the American South and of the Italian *Mezzogiorno* faced was, effectively, one of lack of power and of enduring opposition to the respective national governments. This situation continued, in both cases, until 1876, the year that signaled the end of Reconstruction in the United States and the rise of the first Left government in Italy.

23
See FONER, Eric. *Reconstruction:* America's Unfinished Revolution. New York: Harper & Row, 1988.

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