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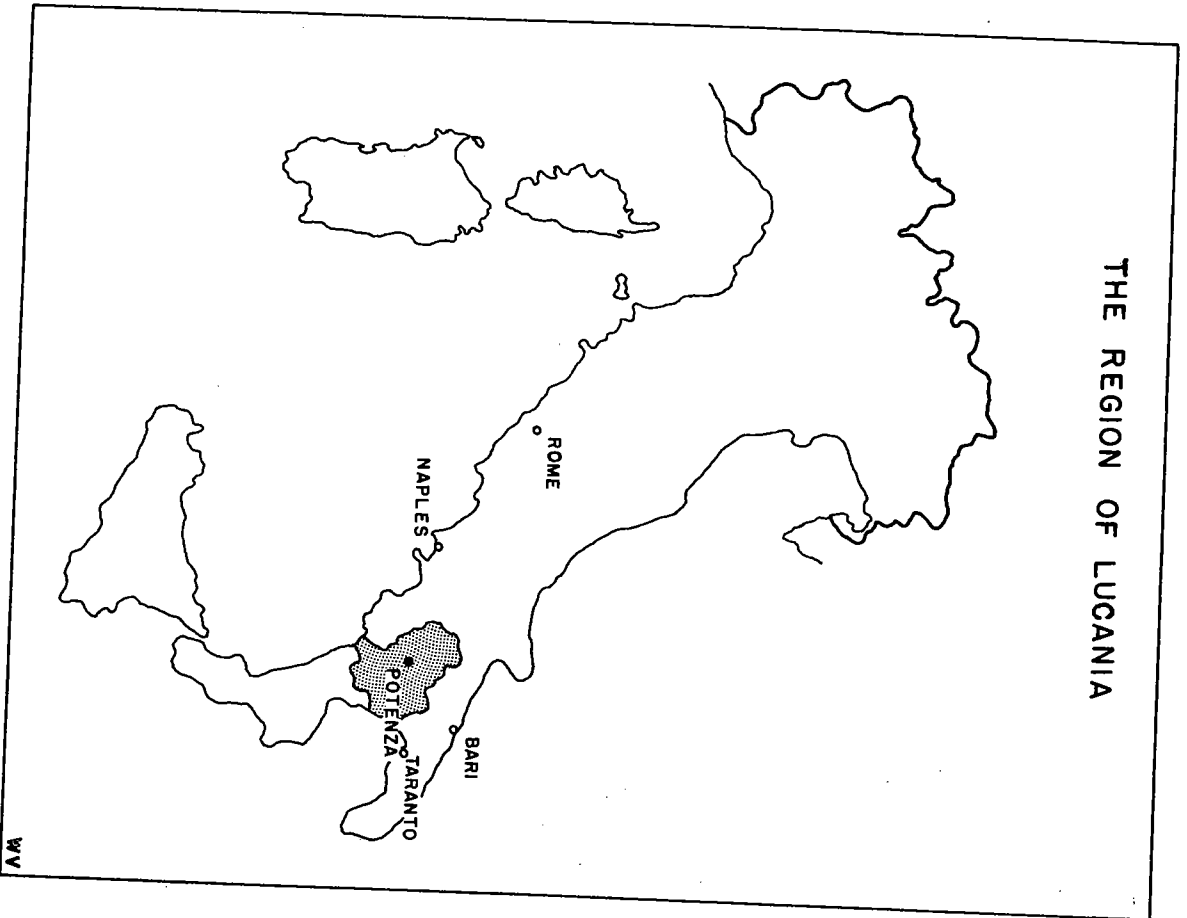
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In such condition, there is no place for industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving, and removing, such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.

-- Hobbes

THE REGION OF LUCANIA



The Moral Basis of a Backward Society

By EDWARD C. BANFIELD

WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF LAURA FASANO BANFIELD

Photographs by the Author

The Free Press
Glencoe, Illinois

Research Center in Economic
Development and Cultural Change,
The University of Chicago

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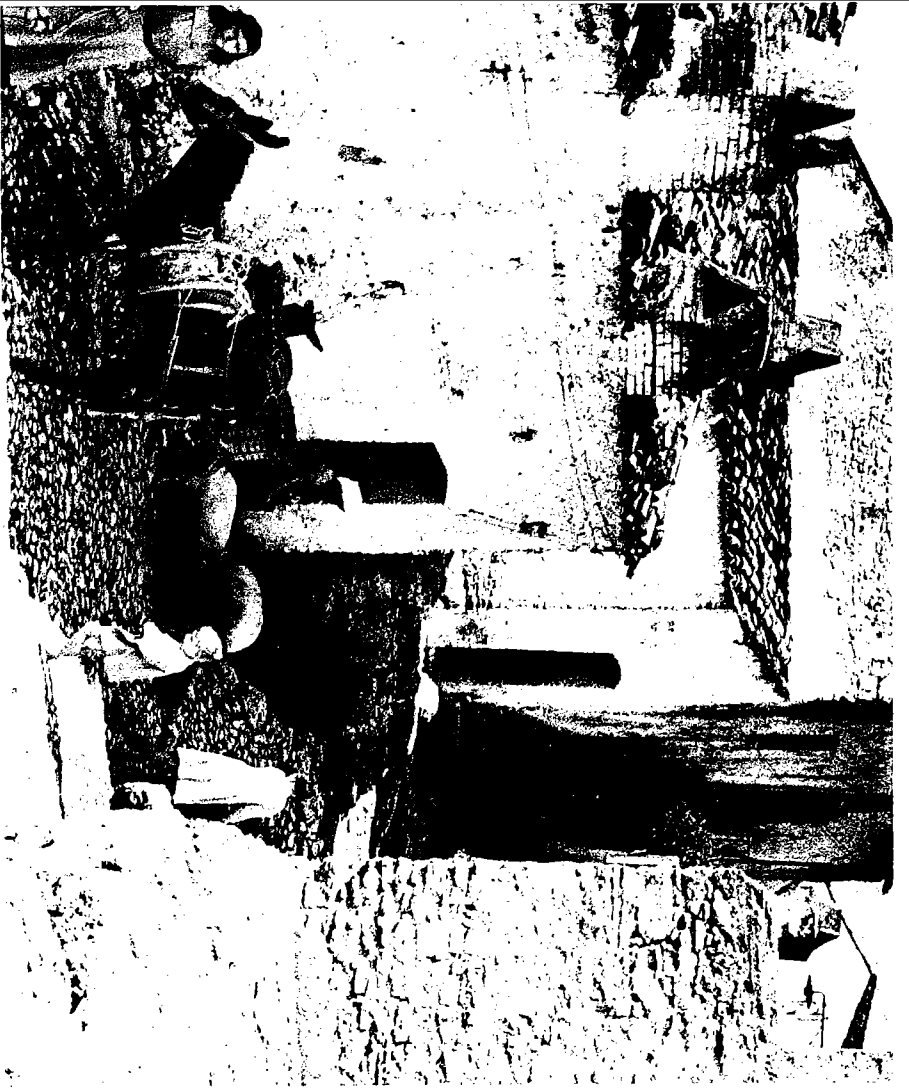
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INTRODUCTION

In democratic countries the science of association is the mother of science; the progress of all the rest depends upon the progress it has made.

-- Tocqueville

Most of the people of the world live and die without ever achieving membership in a community larger than the family or tribe.

Except in Europe and America, the concerting of behavior in political associations and corporate organization is a rare and recent thing.

Lack of such association is a very important limiting factor in the way of economic development in most of the world. Except as people can create and maintain corporate organization, they cannot have a modern economy. To put the matter positively: the higher the level of living to be attained, the greater the need for organization.

Inability to maintain organization is also a barrier to political progress. Successful self-government depends, among other things, upon the possibility of concerting the behavior of large numbers of people in matters of public concern. The same factors that stand in the way of effective association for economic ends stand in the way of association for political ones too. "The most democratic country on the face of the earth", Tocqueville observed, "is that in which men have, in our time, carried to the highest perfection the art of pursuing in common the object of their common desires and have applied this new science to the greatest number of purposes."¹

1. Democracy in America, Knopf edition, Vol. II, p. 107.

We are apt to take it for granted that economic and political associations will quickly arise wherever technical conditions and natural resources permit. If the state of the technical arts is such that large gains are possible by concerting the activity of many people, capital and organizing skill will appear from somewhere, and organizations will spring up and grow. This is the comfortable assumption that is often made.

The assumption is wrong because it overlooks the crucial importance of culture. People live and think in very different ways, and some of these ways are radically inconsistent with the requirements of formal organization. One could not, for example, create a powerful organization in a place where everyone could satisfy his aspirations by reaching out his hand to the nearest coconut. Nor could one create a powerful organization in a place where no one would accept orders or direction.

There is some reason to doubt that the non-Western cultures of the world will prove capable of creating and maintaining the high degree of organization without which a modern economy and a democratic political order are impossible. There seems to be only one important culture--the Japanese--which is both radically different from our own and capable of maintaining the necessary degree of organization. If there is to be more than a superficial overlay of industrialization in China, India, and the other underdeveloped countries, their ethos must be such as to allow the establishment of corporate forms of action.

The ability of a culture to maintain organization cannot meaningfully be measured simply in number or size of organizations. An organization may have many members and cover a large area and yet do very little. In appraising the capacity of a culture to maintain

organization, it is necessary to consider not only numbers and size of organizations but their efficiency, i.e., the rate at which they convert valued input to valued output. In doing this, one must ask how exacting are the purposes or values being served: obviously it is less of a feat to be efficient in the attainment of a purpose which imposes few demands than in the attainment of one which imposes many. That a culture is able to maintain an effective military force, for example, does not imply that it can succeed in the infinitely more difficult task of creating an industrial society in which human values are preserved and improved. If these most difficult and important purposes are taken as the standard, it is even more difficult to see how most cultures of the non-Western world can attain a high level of organization unless they are changed drastically or potentialities now latent in them find expression.

While it is easy to see that culture may be the limiting factor which determines the amount and character of organization and therefore of progress in the less developed parts of the world, it is not obvious what are the precise incompatibilities between particular cultures, or aspects of culture, and particular forms or levels of organization. Even with respect to our own society we know very little about such matters. What, for example, is the significance for organization of various class, ethnic, or sexual attributes within our own culture?

This book is a study of the cultural, psychological, and moral conditions of political and other organization. The approach is that of detailed examination of factors which impede corporate action in a culture which, although not radically foreign to ours, is nevertheless different from it and in some respects closely similar to that of the Mediterranean and Levantine worlds.

The book is about a single village in southern Italy, the extreme poverty and backwardness of which is to be explained² largely (but not entirely) by the inability of the villagers to act together for their common good or, indeed, for any end transcending the immediate, material interest of the nuclear family. This inability to concert activity beyond the immediate family arises from an ethos³ -- that of "amoral familism" -- which has been produced by three factors acting in combination: a high death rate, certain land tenure conditions, and the absence of the institution of the extended family.

Our family -- my wife and I and our two children, then eight and ten years old -- lived among the peasants of Montegrano (the name is fictitious, as are all local ones) for nine months in 1954 and 1955. With the help of an Italian student, my wife interviewed about 70 persons, most of them peasants. (My own knowledge of the language was non-existent to start with and rudimentary later.) In addition, we gathered data from census schedules and other official sources, from record books and autobiographies kept by peasants at our request, and from thematic apperception tests.

It was not practical to employ sophisticated sampling techniques. (To have done so would have left no time for interviewing.) Therefore, we do not know how representative our interviews were; our

2. An explanation, Hume said, is a place where the mind comes to rest. Some of the explanations discussed (Chapter Two) or offered (Chapter Eight) in this book are causal, i. e., they are places where the mind comes to rest when it looks for conditions antecedent to an event and necessary to its occurrence. Others (Chapter Five) are at least superficially of a different sort: they are places where the mind comes to rest when it looks for a principle of identity in seemingly unrelated facts.
3. The concept "ethos" is used in Sumner's sense: "the sum of the characteristic usages, ideas, standards, and codes by which a group is differentiated and individualized in character from other groups." Folkways, p. 36.

impression is, however, that they were highly representative of that part of the population which lives in the town and reasonably representative of the nearby country dwellers. We are not competent to say how representative Montegrano is of southern Italy as a whole; there is some evidence, however, that in the respects relevant to this study, Montegrano is fairly the "typical" south, viz., the rest of Lucania, the regions of Abruzzi and Calabria, the interior of Campania, and the coasts of Catania, Messina, Palermo, and Trapani.⁴

Since our intention is not to "prove" anything, but rather to outline and illustrate a theory which may be rigorously tested by any who care to do so, we think our data -- meager though they are -- are sufficient. There are enough data, at least, to justify systematic inquiry along these lines. Until such inquiry has been made, the argument made here must be regarded as highly tentative.

Some readers may feel that amoral familism, or something very much akin to it, exists in every society, the American no less than the southern Italian. Our answer to this is that amoral familism is a pattern or syndrome; a society exhibiting some of the constituent elements of the syndrome is decisively different from one exhibiting all of them together. Moreover, the matter is one of degree: no matter how selfish or unscrupulous most of its members may be, a society is not amorally individualistic (or familistic) if there is

4. An Australian demographer, J. S. McDonald, has shown that emigration rates in these areas "where economic aspirations were integrated only with the welfare of the individual's nuclear family" have been higher than in other rural districts (i. e., the Veneto, Centre, Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany, Umbria, and Marches) "where aspirations for material betterment were expressed in board associative behavior". "Italy's Rural Social Structure and Emigration", Occidente, Vol. XII, No. 5 (September-October 1956), pp. 437-455.

somewhere in it a significant element of public spiritedness or even of "enlightened" self interest.

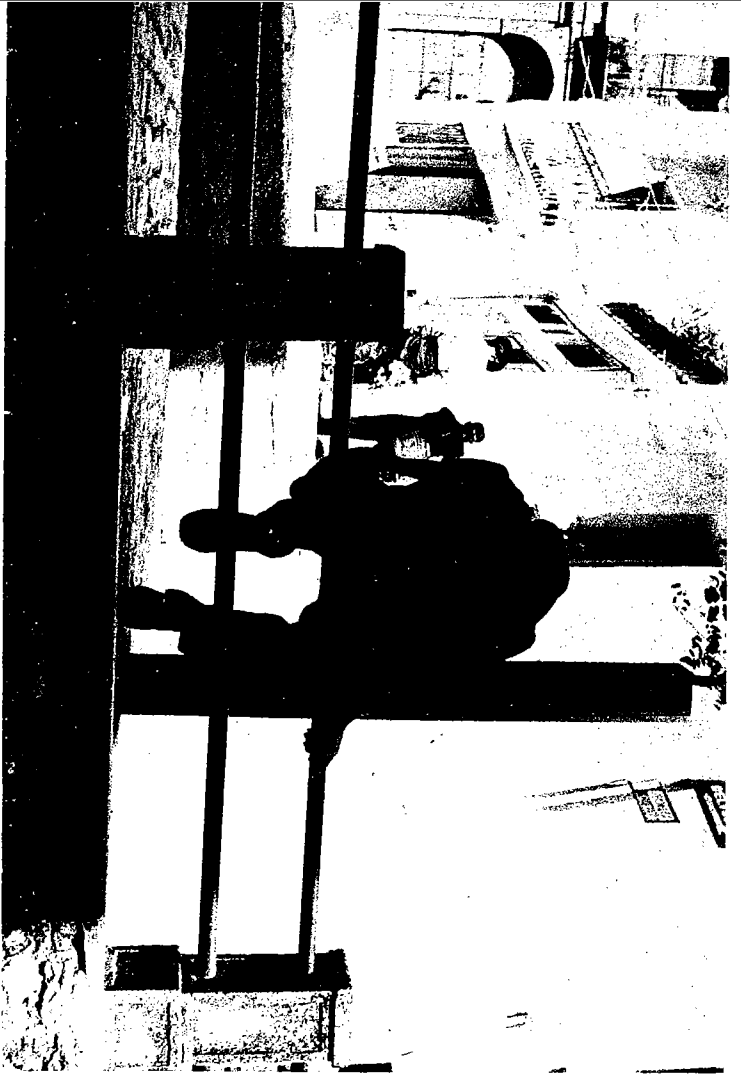
We wish to express appreciation for the interest and courtesies extended by Professor Manlio Rossi-Doria and Dr. Gilberto Marselli of the Scuola Agraria in Portici and to Drs. Giuseppe Barbero and Giuseppe Orlando of the Istituto Nazionale di Economia Agraria in Rome. Mr. Giovanni Giura, now of Chicago, assisted in the field work in Montegrano. Dr. Ivano Rinaldi of Perugia administered the-
matic apperception tests in the Rovigo district and supplied information on social organization there.

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Acknowledgment is made to Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, Inc., publishers of Carlo Levi's Christ Stopped at Eboli, for permission to quote from that book, and to Donald S. Pitkin for permission to quote from his doctoral dissertation, Land Tenure and Family Organization in an Italian Village.

The present tense describes the situation as it was in 1955.





CHAPTER ONE IMPRESSIONS AND QUESTIONS

Americans are used to a buzz of activity having as its purpose, at least in part, the advancement of community welfare. For example, a single issue of the weekly newspaper published in St. George, Utah (population 4,562), reports a variety of public-spirited undertakings. The Red Cross is conducting a membership drive. The Business and Professional Women's Club is raising funds to build an additional dormitory for the local junior college by putting on a circus in which the members will be both clowns and "animals". The Future Farmers of America (whose purpose is "to develop agricultural leadership, cooperation, and citizenship through individual and group leadership") are holding a father-son banquet. A local business firm has given an encyclopedia to the school district. The Chamber of Commerce is discussing the feasibility of building an all-weather road between two nearby towns. "Skywatch" volunteers are being signed up. A local church has collected \$1,393.11 in pennies for a children's hospital 350 miles away. The County Farm Bureau is flying one of its members to Washington, 2,000 miles away, to participate in discussions of farm policy. Meetings of the Parent Teachers Associations are being held in the schools. "As a responsible citizen of our community", the notice says, "you belong in the PTA".

Montegrano, a commune of 3,400 persons, most of them poor farmers and laborers, in the province of Potenza in southern

Italy,¹ presents a striking contrast. The commune consists of a town, lying like a white beehive against the top of a mountain, and twenty-seven square miles of surrounding fields and forests. One-third of the Montegraneesi live on scattered farms at the base of the mountain and in the valley around it. The others live in the town, but since they are mostly farmers and laborers, their waking hours are spent in the fields below the town or on the footpaths that wind between town and country.

No newspaper is published in Montegrano or in any of the thirteen other towns lying within view on nearby hilltops. Occasional announcements of public interest--"there are fish for sale in the piazza at 100 lire per chilo"--are carried by a town crier wearing an official cap, who toots a brass horn to attract attention. Official notices are posted in the salt and tobacco store, a government monopoly, and on a bulletin board in the town hall. Several copies of three or four newspapers published in Rome, Naples, and Potenza come into town by bus every day or two, but these of course do not deal much with local affairs and they are read by very few.

Twenty-five upper class men constitute a "circle" and maintain a clubroom where members play cards and chat. Theirs is the only association. None of the members has ever suggested that it concern itself with community affairs or that it undertake a "project".²

1. Italy is divided into 92 provinces. The province of Potenza includes 97 communes and covers an area of 414 square miles. Its population was 435,495 in 1951. Potenza and Matera provinces together comprise the region of Lucania, or, as it was formerly called, Basilicata.

For a brief, factual account in English of the physical and social geography of southern Italy, see Robert E. Dickinson, The Population Problem of Southern Italy, Syracuse University Press, 1955.

2. According to J. S. McDonald (in a personal communication), Calabrian towns over 2,000 population generally have a "circle

The merchants of Montegrano are well aware of the importance to them of good roads. They would not, however, expect to be listened to by the authorities who decide which roads are to be improved. A Montegrano man might write a letter to the provincial authorities in Potenza or to the newspaper there, but it is unlikely that his doing so would make any difference. In fact, the officials would be likely to resent what they would consider interference in their affairs.

There are no organized voluntary charities in Montegrano. An order of nuns struggles to maintain an orphanage for little girls in the remains of an ancient monastery, but this is not a local undertaking. The people of Montegrano contribute nothing to the support of it, although the children come from local families. The monastery is crumbling, but none of the many half-employed stone masons has ever given a day's work to its repair. There is not enough food for the children, but no peasant or landed proprietor has ever given a young pig to the orphanage.

There are two churches in town and two priests, one the son of a Sicilian peasant and the other the son of a prosperous Montegrano merchant. The churches do not carry on charitable or welfare activities, and they play no part at all in the secular life of the community. Even in religious matters their influence is not very extensive. The life of the town goes on very much as usual on Sunday mornings: the artisans are at work on a new building as usual at seven o'clock, the "nobles" or "circle of gentlemen" (*circolo dei civili*) and sometimes a "circle of workmen", but "they function only as rendezvous. However, back-street drinking dens are important: here the local criminals meet. Otherwise there is no continuous membership of a recreation group (outside nuclear family-clique) for the worker-cultivator class."

stores are all open, and the country people are on their way down the mountainside with their donkeys. Of the 3,400 people in the commune, not more than 350 hear mass on Sunday. These are mostly women. The few men who go to mass remain standing near the door as if to signify that they are not unduly devout. When the collection plate is passed, many people give nothing and few give more than a half a cent (five or ten lire). By tradition the men of Montegrano are anti-clerical. The tradition goes back a century or more to a time when the church had vast holdings in southern Italy and was callous and corrupt. Today it owns only one small farm in Montegrano, and the village priests are both known to be kindly and respectable men. Nevertheless priests in general--so many Montegranesi insist--are money-grubbers, hypocrites, and worse.

When members of the upper class are asked who is known as particularly public-spirited--what private persons are apt to take the initiative in dealing with matters which involve the public welfare--a few mention the Baron di Longo and Colonel Pienso, both of whom live in Rome and are believed to have great influence there. Most people, however, say that no one in Montegrano is particularly public-spirited, and some find the idea of public-spiritedness unintelligible. When an interviewer explained to a young teacher that a "public-spirited" person is one who acts for the welfare of the whole community rather than for himself alone, the teacher said:

No one in town is animated by a desire to do good for all of the population. Even if sometimes there is someone apparently animated by this desire, in reality he is interested in his own welfare and he does his own business.

Even the saints, for all their humility, looked after themselves. And men, after all, are only made of flesh and spirit.

Another teacher said that not only is public-spiritedness lacking, but many people positively want to prevent others from getting ahead.

Truly, I have found no one who interests himself in the general welfare. On the contrary, I know there is tremendous envy of either money or intelligence.

In some southern Italian towns the gentry are said to be indifferent to the misery of the peasants and consumed with hatred for each other. This is not the case in Montegrano. The leading families there get along well together, and many upper class people view the peasant's plight with evident sympathy. These people are not led by their sympathy to try to change things, however.

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The affairs of the commune are conducted by a mayor and elected council and by the provincial civil service which is headed by a prefect in Potenza. The mayor and council propose, but it is the prefect who disposes. Even to buy an ashtray for the city hall requires approval from Potenza; ordinarily, after a certain amount of delay, the decisions of the local elected officials are approved, but this is not always the case and, of course, approval can never be counted upon.

The prefect is represented in Montegrano by the secretary of the commune, a career civil servant assigned from Potenza. With the assistance of two clerks, the secretary transacts all of the routine business of the town. This includes especially the maintenance of tax records, of vital statistics, and the making of disbursements on order of the higher authorities.

The mayor is elected for a four-year term and receives no salary. He represents the commune on all official occasions, supervises the municipal officers, is the legal representative of the commune in dealings with third parties, and has certain powers of certification. In practice, the elected council has little power. In fact, it is seldom possible to get a quorum of its members together at the mayor's call.

The elected officials are office-workers, artisans, and prosperous farmers rather than persons of the highest status. The mayor, for example, is a retired non-commissioned army officer and petty landowner. His council includes as deputy mayor a retired non-commissioned officer in the Carabinieri police, four artisans or storekeepers, five office-workers, five teachers, two farmers, and a lawyer. The lawyer is the only one who is an "upper-upper", and even he is not of the very highest status.

The officials of the commune have nothing to do with the schools. A director of schools, independently responsible to Potenza, resides in Montegrano and has jurisdiction over the elementary schools of several communes. Public works, another important function, is also administered altogether apart from the elected local government.

The police (carabinieri) also are under a separate authority, the Ministry of Justice in Rome. The officer in charge locally (the "maresciallo") cooperates closely with the local authorities, but he is in no sense "their man". As a matter of policy, he is not a native of the town to which he is assigned, and he and his men are under instructions not to fraternize much with the townspeople. The attitude of the carabinieri towards all classes is generally good-tempered, businesslike, and aloof.

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Although the constitution of Italy guarantees that every child will receive schooling through the age of 14, in Montegrano, as in many other places in Italy, only five grades of school are taught. Unless his family can afford to send him away to school, the Montegrano child normally completes his education at the age of 11 or 12.

One-third of the men and two-thirds of the women who were 21 years of age or over in 1954 had attended less than five grades of school. Only five percent of the men and less than two percent of the women had attended more than five grades.³

Children attend school four hours each morning six days a week from the middle of September until the middle of June. Schools are poorly equipped, teachers are poorly paid, and the pupil's and sometimes even the teacher's attendance is irregular. After finishing the fifth grade some pupils can barely read and write or do simple sums. A few years after leaving school, peasant children have often completely forgotten what little they learned. According to a Montegrano school official, one-third of the graduates are illiterate several years after graduation. For the most part these are women. Since 1948, however, a night school for adults has been attended by 12 men a year. Thus in eight years 96 men--two-thirds of them farmers or laborers and the other artisans--had learned, or re-learned, to read and write.

Until recently a large proportion of the children living on outlying farms were unable to go to school at all. Country schools have been built, and their hours adjusted to the convenience of the farm people (in some country schools classes begin at 6 a. m. and end at 10 a. m.). Few children nowadays are prevented from going to school by distance.

Nevertheless, there are many who do not attend regularly. The school authorities, the priests, and the police make joint efforts to persuade parents to send their children to school, and, if all else fails, a parent may be fined if his child is a chronic truant. Some of the farm people, perhaps because they see no use in five grades of

3. Details will be found in Appendix A, Tables 1 and 2.

schooling when there is no opportunity for more, send their children to school willingly only so long as they are too young to work in the fields.

Both because the schools are poor and irregularly attended and because during the war the operation of the school system was badly disrupted, nearly 30 percent of those 10-40 years of age were illiterate in 1951. The rate of illiteracy was highest (44%) among farm people living on outlying farms.

An artisan's child who completes five grades of school is usually apprenticed. However, if he is to become more than a third- or fourth-rate craftsman in one of the traditional crafts (tailoring, barbering, carpentry, stone masonry, and blacksmithing) he must either go to a newly established trade school in a nearby town or serve an apprenticeship in one of the big cities. If he goes away he may learn to be an automobile mechanic, a welder, a typewriter repairer or the like-- skills which would enable him eventually to migrate to the north. But this possibility is not within the reach of many; there are very few artisans who can support their children away from home. Even at the government-run vocational school it is necessary to pay board. And for a Montegrano boy to find a place as an apprentice in a big city is next to impossible unless he has relatives there.

Those few boys and girls who go to "media" school (grades 6-8) must also leave town. The nearest media is in Basso. Basso is not far away, but the bus schedule does not permit commuting. To go to boarding school is very expensive by Montegrano standards. Boarding schools are run by the urban middle class for the urban middle class: a boy must have a corredo of six sheets and pillowcases, two blankets of specified quality, two pairs of "ordinary" and one pair of "dress" shoes, and so on. The corredo, a Montegrano mother estimated,

costs about \$80; other expenses amount to about \$25 a month. The curriculum of the media emphasizes Latin, French (English is not taught even at the University of Naples), history, literature, and government to the virtual exclusion of scientific and technical subjects. Most of those who go to media expect eventually to become teachers, lawyers, government clerks, or physicians.

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Political parties are of little importance in Montegrano. The Fascists held an occasional rally there to which everyone (except the peasants, most of whom escaped to their fields before dawn) was required to come. Political parties in the usual sense did not exist until after the Second World War, however, and even now they are neither strong nor stable.

The Communist Party, for example, got 157 votes in the last (1956) election, but it has no cell in Montegrano. Its local representative is a tailor who reads L'Unità, the Communist daily, but has no other regular connection with the hierarchy. His views are far from orthodox.

We Communists are not really bad people [he explains]. We want only bread and work. We exist because we stand opposed to the injustices of this town. Some people worked full-time building the new town hall. They worked from the day the job began until the day it ended. Others asked for a few days work to earn enough to buy bread and got nothing. This was an injustice. Packages used to come to the town officials from America. Some people always got a share. Others never did. That was an injustice.

America made a big mistake at the end of the war, the Communist tailor thinks. "When America occupied Italy, she should have stayed. It would have been much better for us."

Farnuso, the director of the school district, is a Communist and was once the Communist mayor of another town. He engages in private, informal discussions, but because of his official position does not take a formal part in party affairs in Montegrano. At election times, Communist speakers come from Basso, a larger town where there are paid organizers.

The most influential leader of the extreme left is the physician, Dr. Gino, a Nenni Socialist. Like many doctors in southern Europe, he is a materialist and a socialist by inheritance as well as by training and conviction. (His father is said to have baptized him Franco Marx Gino and to have had him dressed for the ceremony in a red rather than a white gown.) Dr. Gino is the owner of one of the few vineyards in Montegrano--only several acres, but enough to make him one of the town's principal proprietors.

As a doctor and as a landed proprietor, Dr. Gino has done favors for many people. He is, moreover, the leading upper-class exponent of an ideology which demands the leveling of class differences and the division of wealth. Consequently he has a certain following or clientele among the peasants and artisans. There are some who feel that if any upper class person has their welfare at heart, it is he. Others owe him for professional services or want to get work at his vineyard. If he saw fit, he could enlarge his following and turn it to political account. He is too proud, however, and too individualistic to subject himself to the inconveniences and annoyances which serious political activity would entail. "There is a lot of falsity in politics", he explains. "You must make more friends than you want and you must act like a friend to many people you don't want to be friendly with. This is so because you must always be thinking of how to build up the party and win friends for it." He would hate the feeling of having to attend meetings for the party,

and he would hate even more to be reprimanded for saying something out of turn. "I would feel like telling them, 'Go fry an egg'!"

Immediately after the war, in 1945, Dr. Gino overcame his distaste for politics sufficiently to try to organize a branch of the Socialist Party in Montegrano. About one hundred people turned out in the piazza at his call and voted to join the party. But when the application forms arrived and it was realized that a few hire in dues would be required, all interest died. Dr. Gino paid out of his own pocket for the memberships that had been applied for and never tried to organize anything again. "I was trying to get the workers together and to get a labor union started... or at least a group that could act to get what it wanted. But there is no spirit. There is no feeling of working together", he said afterward.

If the presence of a patron like Dr. Gino tends to call a clientele into existence, the presence of a potential clientele also tends to call a patron into existence. Just as some of the Roosevelt family have always found it advantageous to be on the Democratic side, so at least one professional man in every southern Italian town finds satisfaction in taking the part of the workers. A man who would have to compete with many others to make himself influential as a Christian Democrat may have the field to himself as a left-wing socialist.

The strongest party in Montegrano is the Christian Democratic (DC) party--"the party of the priests", as the peasants say. The Montegrano priests are in fact extremely active politically both in the pulpit and out. (One of them even became involved in a fist-fight at an election-eve rally.) Other leading figures include the lawyer, an amiable young man who is one of the most thoughtful people in town, and two retired petty officers of the army and the carabinieri, respectively, who are mayor and vice-mayor. In view of widespread anti-clericalism, there is reason to suppose that many voters support the

Christian Democratic party despite its connection with the church rather than because of it.

Just before elections the Christian Democratic party distributes small packages of pasta, sugar, and clothing to the voters. These are called gifts from the Vatican. The voter would be no less willing to accept gifts from any other quarter. "If the Russians sent over 25 bushels of grain", a defeated candidate remarked after the last election, "the people would vote the Christian Democrats out of office tomorrow."

The Monarchist Party is the only right-wing group of importance. It is supported by the Baron di Longo and other landed proprietors and by a scattering of individuals in all other social classes. The secretary of the party is a retired petty officer of the carabinieri who runs a bar. The Monarchist Party, he says, stands for order, peace, lower taxes, and no revolution. By "order" he means "respect", "not too much criticism", and "giving what is expected in all cases".

A monarchy is the best kind of government because the king is then the owner of the country. Like the owner of a house, when the wiring is wrong, he fixes it. He looks after his people like a father. If you have a child, always you love him more and do more for him than you would for others. It is in this way that the king looks after his people. He wants them to love him. He loves them. In a republic, the country is like a house that is rented. If the lights go out, well, that's all right...it's not his house. If the wall chips, well, it's not his house. The renter does not fix it. So with the men who govern a republic. They are not interested in fixing things. If something is not quite right and if they are turned out for it, well, meanwhile they have filled their pocketbooks.

The moderate socialist party (PSDI) has little strength in Montegrano.

The so-called neo-fascist party (MSI) is of no importance.

In Montegrano it is not unusual for party officials to change their allegiances suddenly. Six months after he had made the statement

quoted above, the secretary of the Monarchist Party announced that he had become a Communist. A few weeks later he was a Monarchist again.

The variability in the voters' behavior is also striking. There are eleven towns in the election district of which Montegrano is a part. Some are poorer than others, and in some land ownership is more widely diffused than in others. To the casual eye, however, these differences do not seem crucial--all of the towns have in common extreme poverty and isolation. The voting behavior of the towns differs greatly, however. As the following table shows, the Communist vote in them in 1953 ranged from two to forty-six percent and from two to seventy-nine percent in 1956.

Table 1. Percentage of Votes Cast for Parties of Left, Center, and Right, Provincial Elections of 1953 and 1956, Election District which Includes Montegrano

Town	Population	Percentage Voting for					
		Left		Center		Right	
		1953	1956	1953	1956	1953	1956
Montegrano	3,400	23	18	44	62	33	20
Addo	1,039	46	9	28	72	26	19
Basso	6,473	45	36	46	62	9	2
C	1,169	26	12	57	35	17	53
D	1,100	25	25	55	70	20	5
E	894	22	26	52	49	26	25
F	1,695	19	79	68	17	13	4
G	859	16	21	43	69	41	10
H	2,064	8	2	83	68	9	30
I	2,196	7	3	80	73	13	24
J	2,431	2	5	94	89	4	6

Note: "Left" includes Communist and Nenni Socialist parties; "center" Christian Democrat and Saragat Socialist; and "right" Monarchist and MSI.

Variability in voting behavior exists not only from town to town but from election to election within the same town. For example, Addo, the

town with the largest percentage of Communist votes in 1953, was solidly Christian Democrat before the 1953 election and again in 1956. But at the same time, town "F" swung violently from the center to the left. Such sudden shifts are not rare in southern Italy.

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In Montegrano and nearby towns an official is hardly elected before the voters turn violently against him. As soon as he gets into office, his supporters say--often with much justice--he becomes arrogant, self-serving, and corrupt. At the next election, or sooner if possible, they will see that he gets what is coming to him. In Montegrano there is no better way to lose friends than to be elected to office.

In the following letter, written by a lower class Montegraneese to a friend abroad, the village political style appears in its characteristic form:

It is true that the Mayor, Vincenzo Spomo, has resigned. That was nearly two months ago. But it was not by his own wish; it was at the prompting of the Council.

As you know, the Council had two factions. Among the Christian Democrats, that is, there were two factions with different ideas, factions which had never agreed from the beginning. Spomo, always in character, wanted to command things for his own purposes. He thought it was as it used to be in the old administration, but this time he had to deal with people who were college graduates... who really had some brains. It was not as he thought.

Every now and then the Council met. When he brought up something the members did not like, they would oppose him once, twice, three times, until he was beaten. But one night at a Council meeting he was forced to resign.

Now I want to tell you a little about Spomo. The people were always unhappy with him. He pleased himself. He helped only those he wished to help. All the circulars that

came he locked up in his drawer and would not even inform the Council members of them. It was not so much his own will as that of his followers that carried him along, and if the Christian Democrats lost votes it was on account of him personally.

As I said, the Council was divided in two factions. Seven were in favor of Spomo and eleven were in favor of the present mayor. When Spomo heard how the voting went and that he was beaten, he got up without saying a word to anyone and left. Naturally, the new mayor got to his feet and began to thank all those who had voted for him, and the crowd applauded him and acclaimed him until he had to stay the applause with his hands... so long did the applause last.

The people are happier because this new mayor is on the side of everyone, listens to everyone, answers everyone, and wants the mass of the workers to be protected.

We will wait and see.

You know what I think about it? I am glad that Spomo no longer governs. He ended up by commanding with the haughtiness of a marshal of the army, just as if he were commanding his soldiers. It was the way he thought--that he was commanding the people of Montegrano. Those he liked he would raise to the stars and those he did not like he would crush. His tongue was for nothing but scolding, and he believed himself a superman. He gave the impression that we were living in the era of the feudal lords.

As for the people, what they think depends upon who they are. If they received favors, they are followers. Those who received neither good nor evil from him, they just repeat what they hear. The majority of those who talk are peasants and laborers.

One morning a jitney driver and a peasant were in the bar. The driver said that one could not find the equal of Spomo as the head of the administration for this town. The other said, "Perhaps so when it came to presumption and promises, but when it came to something positive, the mayor had nothing." Then the driver said that besides being good and fine the mayor had a lot of support--"the support of many influentials, especially the Minister of Agriculture, the prefect, and others. If the Mayor falls [this was before he did fall], the prefect will send a commissioner and the town will see that it will have to pay \$5.00 a day [for the support of the commissioner] and in the end Spomo, who is the secretary of the Christian Democratic party, will be appointed commissioner... so you will see that he will be not only mayor but also commissioner and you will have to pay him."

The peasant answered that in any event we will pay less than the vacations he has had and the waste he has made have cost during his administration. The argument came very short of ending in blows.

I don't even mention the dissatisfaction of Nino's peasants who had been promised electricity in their zone and heard nothing about it since. Now they don't want to hear or know anything about it. They say that at the next elections they are not going to vote for anyone at all because they [the politicians] are all in it for themselves only.

Of this new mayor one can say nothing as yet because he has not been in very long. I can say only one thing with accuracy--that so persistent were Councilmen Viva and Lasso that we have been given--and it has already got underway--a winter work project which will last two months and employ forty workers a day. They will repair the roads and walls of the town.

As regards the gentry, naturally one knows nothing. Or, to say it better, they are reserved and don't let you hear anything.

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These impressions of political behavior in Montegrano raise a number of questions.

What accounts for the absence of organized action in the face of pressing local problems? Why, for example, is nothing done about the schools? To the peasants, many of whom are desperately anxious for their children to get ahead, the lack of educational opportunity is one of the bitterest facts of life. Upper class people are affected too; some of them would like to live in Montegrano and cannot do so because it would cost too much to send their children away to a boarding school. One might think, then, that improvement of the local school would be an important local issue--one on which people would unite in political parties or otherwise. Failing to persuade the government to build a media school, upper class volunteers might teach an additional grade or two. Or, if this is too much to expect, the bus schedule might be

changed so that the Montegrano children could commute to nearby Basso for the higher grades. However, such possibilities have not been considered.

The nearest hospital is in Potenza, five hours away by automobile. For years Montegrano people have complained that the state has not built a hospital in the village. The doctor and two or three other people have written letters to Rome urging that one be built, but that is as far as the effort to get one has gone. Candidates for local office do not campaign on the hospital "issue", and there has been no organized effort to bring pressure to bear upon the government. Nor has there been any consideration of stopgap measures such as might be taken locally--for example, equipping an ambulance to carry emergency cases from Montegrano and other nearby towns to Potenza.

These, of course, are only two of many possible examples of needs which would give rise to community action in some countries, but about which nothing is done in Montegrano.

The question of why nothing is done raises other questions. Why are the political parties themselves so unconcerned with local issues? Why is there no political "machine" in Montegrano, or even any stable and effective party organization? What explains the marked differences in the appeal of left, center, and right from town to town among towns that on the surface seem so much alike? What explains the erratic behavior of the electorate in a single town from one election to the next? And why do those elected to office at once lose credit with their supporters?

The remainder of this book is a search for answers to these specific questions and, above all, to the general question: what accounts for the political incapacity of the village?

4. Cf. for example the handling of the school problem in the southern French village described by Laurence Wylie in Village in the Vaucluse, Harvard University Press, 1957, pp. 223-227.

