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014/3

BRITISH CONSULATE - GENERAL  
VIA SAN PAOLO 7  
I 20121 MILAN

HM Minister and Consul-General, Milan, to HM Ambassador, Rome.

WRJ 014/2  
19 SEP 1977

DESK OFFICER	REGISTER
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SUMMARY

1. The division of Italy into the prosperous and hardworking North and backward and ineffective South is a myth based on reality (para 1).
2. The North has a lavish standard of living in spite of both the statistics and the fundamental financial weakness (paras 2-4).
3. There is a political as well as an economic paradox: the people of the North are convinced that they are badly governed but leave the Christian Democrats in power by voting according to habit. Reasons for this (paras 5 and 6).
4. The prosperous Communists of the North are part of the paradox (para 7).
5. Other divisive forces within the Italian State (paras 8 and 9).
6. Overtones of racialism in Northern attitude to the people of the South (para 10).
7. These divisive tendencies are unlikely to threaten Italian unity, although paradoxically they could be stimulated if a stronger central government were to emerge (para 11).

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BRITISH CONSULATE - GENERAL  
VIA SAN PAOLO 7  
I 20121 MILAN  
5 July 1979

Sir Ronald Arculus KCMG  
ROME

Sir

THE NORTH-SOUTH DIVISION IN ITALY

1. The area with which this post is concerned, Italy north of Latium and Abruzzo, more or less corresponds with a notional division of Italy into two parts, North and South, a division which exists if only because the majority of Italians think that it does. Italians in the North think of themselves as belonging to the main stream of European civilisation, enlightened, hard-working and technologically advanced. They think of the people of the South as poor and backward and doomed to remain so because of their lack of energy, determination and ability. They regard them as vastly inferior to themselves and deficient in all the qualities needed for success in the contemporary world. They think of them as a social and economic liability. They see the border between North and South as one between the European heartland and the Mediterranean world, and they place it not far south of Florence. This division has many of the qualities of a myth but that it also has some reality appears from statistics of every kind from unemployment and income per head to illiteracy and the results of last week's school examinations. The people of the North think of Rome as something apart and not properly belonging to the South although geographically surrounded by it and strongly infected by Southern attitudes and habits. Based as I am in Milan and travelling a good deal in the North of Italy, I probably look on the Italian scene, if there is any truth in these

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theories, from a different viewpoint and under different influences from those to be found in Rome. For this reason, it might be of some use if I attempt to sum up my impressions of Italy as seen from Milan, the capital of the North.

2. The first impression is one of extraordinary prosperity. There is very little outward sign either of political tension or of economic difficulty. From outward appearances at least, I would say that the standard of living seems higher than anywhere else of which I have personal experience, not excluding North America. The Americans may have larger cars and more air conditioning; but the Italians of the North eat better, dress more fashionably and take longer and more frequent holidays. When you go from the North of Italy into Switzerland, you do not have the impression of going from a poorer country to a richer but of precisely the opposite. It is partly because the Italians, unlike the Swiss, believe in outward show and therefore insist on fashionable clothes and flashy cars but it is not merely outward show. Every form of expenditure for personal gratification is at a high level. Imports of champagne and whisky per head of the population beat all records. The addiction to the motor car and the weekend in the mountains or at the sea jams the roads every Sunday evening; the town is deserted for the whole of August when the population moves on to the beaches of Italy except for those who follow the more recent fashion for holidays in exotic places like Siam. The food shops and restaurants are among the best in the world.

3. If next you go and discuss the situation with a Milanese banker, you will be given a completely different story which seems to bear no relation to your observations. He will give you a very gloomy account of the fundamental weakness and hopeless future of the Italian economy. He will say that the country is



living wildly beyond its means, that the labour and social legislation is a weight which the economy cannot bear, that industry is now being driven into bankruptcy and being kept afloat by loans all of which are building up an accumulated debt which is bound to lead to the complete collapse of the currency. He will probably then admit that he is speaking in orthodox financial terms and with reference to the part of the economy which is susceptible to statistics; that in Italy nothing is quite what it seems and that the Italians will probably continue to display the extraordinary capacity for survival which they have always shown.

4. It is of course a commonplace of comment on Italy that it is a poor country. This is repeated by Italian politicians when it suits them and by the people at large who are simultaneously enjoying the lavish standard of living which I have described. Italy is poor in the sense that it has no mineral resources to speak of but it is rich in the talent and flair of the people and in the astonishing fertility of the soil, even if much of this is now neglected. It is presumably on these two assets that the astonishing wealth of the past was based. Everywhere in the North of Italy it is impossible to escape the evidence of past wealth. The whole of the North of Italy is packed with towns of a staggering artistic and architectural richness, not only Florence and Venice but others which are smaller and less well-known like Parma, Ferrara or Mantova. Byron said that there were no provincial towns in Italy only capitals. He was right in the sense (and there are others) that these towns, even the smallest of them, have palaces, cathedrals, theatres and great town houses which should be the boast of a capital city anywhere else in the world. The talent and energy which created these towns is not dead yet. One of the ways in which it expresses itself is in an unofficial,



submerged or secret economy which escapes the statistics. All over the North of Italy there are small successful industries, many of them family concerns, producing goods of high added value which command a ready sale on the world markets. They keep to themselves and evade the more stringent requirements of the labour legislation and probably taxation as well. They are the opposite side of the coin from the large bankrupt enterprises and are part of the explanation for the discrepancy between the statistics and the facts.

5. There are political as well as economic contradictions. Piero Ottone in his recent book "Come Finirà" makes the point that the Christian Democrats do not understand the West in general and capitalist system and the need for profit in particular. They see nothing wrong with the creation of vast enterprises running at heavy financial loss with no other purpose than the creation of employment and a reserve of grateful voters. For the same reasons, government departments and agencies are grossly over-staffed. Expense is no object; the Christian Democrats behave as if they believed that wealth could be created by printing banknotes. Hence the despair of the Milanese bankers. This is one of the ways in which the dominant ethos within the Christian Democrat party is quite alien to the Northern Italian, who is nothing if not economically realistic with a keen sense of the importance of profit. As Ottone also says, nearly all Italians seem to be firmly convinced that their country is badly governed. Everywhere in the North one is told constantly about the ineptitude of Italian politicians and the appalling inadequacies of the administration. There is a curiously detached attitude to the political game as it is played in Rome and it is regarded with little except boredom and distaste.



6. These feelings towards the Christian Democrats are so widespread in the North one might expect that the voter was only waiting for the next election for a chance to make his disapproval felt. In fact, of course, the opposite is true. The Christian Democrats have been in power continuously for 30 years and the voting pattern scarcely changes from one election to the next. How is this to be explained? It is certainly not because the Christian Democrat politicians are attractive and persuasive. On the contrary they are mostly old, pompous and boring; it is rare to find anyone who has a good word to say for them. There are of course many explanations. Partly it is fear of Communism which makes many voters feel that they must vote DC whether they like it or not. In some places it is the strength of the Catholic Church and their association, even if it is now muted, with the DC. Some of the other possible, and perhaps more likely explanations are less obvious. Under the DC labour legislation has been introduced which is probably the most generous to the employee of any in the world; no self-declared workers' party could do more. The Italians, at least in the North, have enjoyed an extraordinary boom and their standard of living is still insulated from inflation. It would not be surprising if they are scared to rock the boat. Then there is the patronage system under which great numbers of people owe the Christian Democrats gratitude for a job, a pension, a building licence or some other favour. (I have never quite understood why people cannot accept the favour and then vote as they please; but perhaps patronage has its own code of honour.) People in the North will tell you that this system is seen in its full flower only in the South but they would not deny that it is not without influence in the North as well. Several people have suggested to me yet another explanation for the rigidity of voting habits: that the historical memories of foreign occupation, and more recent ones of Fascism have made the Italians distrust



effective government. In voting as they do they have found a formula which creates political stalemate and impotence, but that is precisely what they want.

7. The practice of voting according to habit applies to all parties including the Communists. There are towns and provinces in the North, particularly in Emilia Romagna, where the PCI is always the largest party. Places like Bologna, Ferrara, Modena have had a Communist administration for years. The men leading these administrations are very surprising to anyone with conventional ideas about Communism. They have gentle manners, elegant clothes and are studiously moderate in everything they say. In conversation they are inclined to decry not only terrorism but the excessive expectations of the workers. They are full of concern for the preservation of traditions, artistic standards and the magnificent historical buildings, in one of which they inevitably have their offices. It may well be an act but it is a very convincing one. These bourgeois Northern Communists are perhaps less of a puzzle when one realises that there is no obvious relationship between the prosperity of an area and its voting pattern. Communists are certainly not confined to depressed industrial areas; for the most part their strongholds in Emilia Romagna and Tuscany are agricultural and highly prosperous. Many Communists look like prosperous members of the middle class because that is what they are.

8. The Italians of the North, especially outside the large cities, are perfectly conscious of their good fortune. Milan, Turin and Genoa have the problems of large cities everywhere including unemployment, crime and violence. They also have the complication of a flood of Southern immigrants, many of whom are unassimilated and a fertile source of social problems. People in Milan and Turin often say that the towns and their way of life have been ruined by the immigrants. This, of course, is unfair because what they are in fact complaining about are the inevitable consequences of a rapid industrial expansion, which they welcomed at the time because it produced prosperity, even if it also damaged the environment. The expansion and the prosperity could not have been achieved without Southern labour. These problems hardly disturb the rest of the North. When I call on politicians and officials in the smaller towns, they almost always boast of the contentment and tranquillity as well as the prosperity of their



provinces. They often say that Italy is divided into three: the industrial triangle of Milan, Turin and Genoa where the cities and the industries suffer from the problems of size; the backward and impoverished South and the rest of the North which is free from the problems of both of the others.

9. Even this division into three is incomplete because there are many other possible sub-divisions. There are the three peripheral regions of Val d'Aosta, Trentino Alto-Adige and Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, with coherent minorities speaking French, German or Serbo-Croat who are consciously non-Italian. The political parties through which they express themselves are all solidly established. But even in the heartland of the Italian North there are strong feelings of local identity. The people of Bergamo or Ferrara, for instance, behave as though the city states or dukedoms had never ceased to exist and as though Italy was an abstraction with which they were not too closely involved. The division of Italy into Regions, the Italian version of Devolution, was introduced about 10 years ago, with the purpose of both expressing and containing these divergences and individualities. Although these Regions were given very considerable power they have not yet made the impact that one might have expected. In the first place they are too large to act as a focus for any of the traditional loyalties; a Region like Lombardy contains within itself a number of old historical states who were bitter rivals in the past. The Regional Governments are restricted by Rome's retention of a firm hand on the purse-strings. They are limited also by the fact that the parties represented in the Regional Assemblies, except in the three peripheral areas, are the same parties which form the central government. These parties themselves are very closely directed from their central headquarters. The voting habits of the electors are, by and large, the same for the Regions as





for the centre and therefore have the same inbuilt tendency towards immobility and stagnation. For all these reasons the Regions have been slow to find their feet. They have been occupied more with planning future action than with the action itself; but, there are some signs that they are about to move into a more self-assertive phase.

10. Again if we except the peripheral areas, which are in some senses hardly Italian at all, I do not think that there is much doubt that it is the feeling of difference from the South which is the strongest and has the most dangerous overtones. It is often expressed in terms which are close to a Hitlerian racialism. Even Italian officials whose *raison d'être* is the defence of Italian unity and its institutions are not free from this attitude. The officials who above all have precisely this function are the Prefects, one of whom is stationed in each regional capital, in conditions of some splendour, to represent the central government and to contribute to the cohesion of the country. One of them in an important city in the North once told me that he thought it was a disaster that most Italian emigrants living abroad came from the South and therefore gave a false and unfortunate impression of what Italians were really like. Another told me that, without the burden of the South, Italy could be as prosperous as Switzerland or West Germany and that it was the Southern immigrants into the North who were responsible for most of the unrest, crime and political violence. (Ironically enough many of the Prefects, like Italian officialdom in general, are themselves of Southern origin.) Comments of this kind from officials are of course studiously mild in comparison with what one hears in ordinary conversation. Derogatory comments on the people of the South are so constant and wide-spread in the North that the Southerners must be aware of them. It is surprising that they do not make their resentment obvious unless this is indeed one of the underlying causes of much of the apparently mind-less and purpose-less political violence.



11. With so many diversive measures is there a tendency for Italy to divide again into its component parts? In spite of appearances to the contrary I do not think that this is at all likely. Italian schoolchildren are brought up to believe that the unification of Italy was a great historical achievement and I think that they accept this as true. The people of Val d'Aosta and Alto-Adige seem to be content with the degree of autonomy which they already enjoy and likely to remain so as long as attention is paid to their linguistic grievances. The Serbo-Croat speakers in the North East are insufficiently numerous to be a real problem and in any case have no desire for closer association with Yugoslavia. Trieste is a special case but since their fear is of Yugoslav infiltration they want to be more Italian and not less. Simply because the Italians distrust government, there is no suggestion that the people of Bergamo, Ferrara and the rest have any desire to translate their local identity into a constitutional expression. The people of the North certainly regard the South as a liability but they accept it as a liability which is a fact of life. No political programme in Italy, almost no political speech, is complete without the ritual reference to the need to develop the South. There is no serious resistance to this aspiration, even if it is part of the wealth of the North which is being channelled into the South. People in the North often say that it would be better if Italy could jettison everything south of Florence; but this is only a black joke. Italians are a particularly tolerant people addicted to the doctrine of live and let live. They are much more concerned with their own private interests than with any matter of public policy. What they chiefly ask from government is to be left alone. We therefore return to the conclusion that the paralysis and impotence of the central government suits Italy very well; paradoxically it is perhaps



the best guarantee of Italian unity. A stronger and more active government might stimulate the strains which now lie below the surface.

12. I am sending copies of this despatch to HM Consul-General in Naples and HM Consuls in Florence, Genoa, Palermo and Venice.

I am Sir

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'P H Scott', written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above a horizontal line that underlines the printed name below.

P H Scott



British Embassy  
Via XX Settembre 80A 00187 Rome

Telex 61049 Telephone 4755.441

P H Scott Esq CMG  
HM Consul General  
MILAN

Mr. Nash

WRJ cr1/2	
RECEIVED IN REGISTRY NO. 13	
Your reference	
19 SEP 1979	
Our reference	
Date	26 July 1979

I think this ex-  
change deserves a wider audience.

Re considered

My dear Paul,

Jul  
31/7

THE NORTH-SOUTH DIVISION IN ITALY

1. We were very interested to read your thoughtful and elegant despatch of 5 July on this subject. The Ambassador, who as you know went on leave on 26 July, read it on arrival but will undoubtedly wish to read it again with our comments on his return and before his first visit to Milan.
2. You describe very well, if I may say so, the prosperity of Northern Italy and the general distrust which Northerners feel of the South and, in particular, of the central bureaucracy. It is good for us in Rome to be reminded of these Northern attitudes. But at the same time (without wishing to indulge in North versus South polemics!) I would suggest that this is only part of the story. One could paint a much less favourable picture of the North. A particular point which comes to mind, and which you hardly touch on in your despatch, is (as the Prefect of Pavia recently observed to you) the fact that political terrorism in Italy is an essentially Northern phenomenon which has its roots in the major cities of the North and has spread from there southwards. Another is the high rate of crime in Northern cities, (worsened no doubt, as you suggest, by the Southern immigrant element). And the complacency with which the Northerners regard their prosperity in contrast to the South and declare their contempt for the government gives evidence of a dangerous irresponsibility.
3. A further point which has struck those of us who travel all over Italy from this Embassy is that although there is undoubtedly, as you say, great wealth in the North, there are also desperately poor districts in Northern cities such as Milan and Turin. Conversely, there are some extremely rich-looking areas in many Southern Italian towns. Lecce, for example, is probably quite as impressive, both as regards its historical monuments and its present look of affluence, as Mantova or Ferrara; and despite the squalor of much of Naples, there are sectors of the town which are as presentable and affluent as many parts of Genoa. The distinction between the rich, hard-working North and the poor, backward South is perhaps not always as hard and fast

as/



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as it is made out to be. Factories in the South for example, manned entirely by Southerners, are often proving more efficient than their mother organisations in the North. A case in point is Fiat, whose most efficient factories are now all in the Mezzogiorno.

4. Your despatch has also caused us to wonder about the historical origins of the North-South division and about the question of whether the gap is widening. These are complex questions. One could perhaps suggest that much of the North's dislike of Southern bureaucracy stems from the fact that this bureaucracy grew out of what the Bourbons left behind in the South, the efficient Piedmontese having had little or no influence on developments after the House of Savoy moved to Rome. It can also be argued that there is a connexion between the support for the PCI in the "Red Belt" and the maladministration of the former Papal States. As for whether the division between North and South is widening, I rather doubt whether feelings between North and South could ever be said to have reached proportions of "Hitlerian racialism". Even in Britain, people lightly express regional prejudices (Scots v. English, Yorkshire v. Lancashire, indeed, North v. South) without meaning very much by it. These are, as you suggest more likely to be black jokes. Even if the Regions are moving into a more self-assertive phase, I agree with you that underlying feelings of unity are strong enough to prevent any risk of a break up of the Italian state. I would even go so far as to say that with all the investment there has been, and will continue to be, in the South, with better communications and the enormous amount of emigration that has taken place, the division between North and South has already been narrowed, in some respects.

5. I am coping this letter to the other Consular posts to whom you sent copies of your despatch. If they have views on the subject we would welcome them; I should particularly like to hear from John Campbell. I am also sending a copy, together with a copy of your despatch, to David Gladstone, Head of WED.

*Yours truly,*

*Alan*

A C Goodison

cc:

HM Consul-General, Naples

HM Consuls: Florence

Genoa

Palermo

Venice

D A Gladstone Esq, WED, FCO ✓  
(with copy of despatch)

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BRITISH CONSULATE - GENERAL  
 VIA SAN PAOLO 7  
 I 20121 MILAN  
 6 August 1979



014/3

A C Goodison Esq CMG  
 British Embassy  
 ROME

Mr. Nash

WORS 014/2

RECEIVED IN REGISTRY ROOM  
 19 SEP 1979

DESK OFFICER

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7/8

Dear Alvin,

## THE NORTH-SOUTH DIVISION OF ITALY

1. Thank you for your letter of 26 July and your interesting comments on my recent despatch on this subject.
2. I hope it was clear from the despatch that I was attempting to describe an attitude which is prevalent in the North of Italy towards the South, and not to justify or support it. Certainly, this attitude is prejudiced, unfair and exaggerated. As I said in the despatch, we are dealing with a myth, even if, like all myths, it is based on fact.
3. Also, of course, the proponents of a myth always have a quick answer when any of their facts are challenged. It would be easy to illustrate this from some of the points which you make in your letter, and I do this not to argue in favour of the Northern attitude but to show that we are talking about a stubborn and entrenched prejudice. For example, it is perfectly true that the Prefect of Pavia (who is a Southerner) told me that political terrorism was a Northern phenomenon. On the other hand the Prefect of Cremona (my letter of 27 June) said that it was the Southern immigrants in the North who created the atmosphere which bred both political violence and crime. In a sense both are right; but it is the Prefect of Cremona who represents the general Northern view. If this is a Northern prejudice, it is one which is sustained every day by the reports in the newspapers which show that very many of the criminals, and especially the kidnapers (who are the worst of the lot) are Southern immigrants.
4. Again, there is no doubt that there are patches of wealth and success in the South just as there are patches of poverty and deprivation in the North. The Northerner would reply that a few exceptions prove nothing and that in any case the squalid areas in the North are created and inhabited almost exclusively by immigrants from the South. One of the most frequent and most bitter of all complaints about the Southerner which one hears in the North is about the way in which the Southern immigrants are said to have destroyed the quality of life in towns like Milan and Turin. As I said in the despatch, this is largely unfair because it is really industrial development, of which immigration was an aspect, which has done the environmental damage. On the other hand, the Northern attitude to this is one which is shared by observers who are not Italian at all. Peter

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Nichols, for example, has this description of a slum in Turin: "The whole dilapidated area has been turned into a Southern town. The washing across the streets, the menacing looking men in striped shirts around the market stalls, the atmosphere of vice born from poverty, the plaintive wails of the women; it has nothing to do with Western Europe." The Northern Italian would add that it is equally alien to Northern Italy.

5. In paragraph 4 of your letter you raise the question of the historical origins of the North-South division. The point about a connection between the maladministration in the Papal States and support for the PCI in the "Red Belt" is one which is made very frequently (see for example my report of a visit to Ferrara in my letter of 19 June); but this is really a separate, if connected, question. So indeed is the whole matter of the distrust and dislike of government, which is one of the favourite themes of everyone who writes about Italy. Nearly all of them say the same thing, that it is the result of centuries of foreign occupation and of more recent experience of sterile, corrupt and inefficient government. By coincidence, an example has just appeared in an article written by Luigi Barzini in the "Corriere della Sera" of 1 August. He talks about the small and medium industries in places like Brescia and Bergamo succeeding in spite, and not because, of anything the government can do. He says that the people look at Rome and at the Government with the same distrust as Milan used to look on Madrid or Vienna. Then he goes on to say this: "Nulla è tuttavia più umiliante (e funesto) del dover fare progredire il proprio Paese (e se stessi e i propri dipendenti e la propria cittadina) quasi di nascosto, in semiclandestinità, contro governi esosi e miopi, leggi malcongegnate e dannose, e la mancanza di leggi serie." This is by no means an untypical statement of the Northern attitude.

6. Incidentally, I did not say that feelings between the North and South had "reached proportions of Hitlerian racialism". What I did say, and it is something very different, is that the feelings are "often expressed in terms which are close to a Hitlerian racialism". Admittedly this is a strong phrase but I chose it deliberately to attempt to convey the way in which people in the North speak about the Southerners with disgust or contempt as though they were some sort of inferior species which was barely human. This is a hard thing to say and it is not often admitted by commentators on the Italian scene but it is the way they speak. It is language which is very close to Nazi racialism, but I do not suggest for a moment that the similarity goes beyond that.

7. I agree that it is difficult to say whether the North-South division is becoming more or less acute. Perhaps in the long run the improvement in communications and the volume of immigration from the South to North might tend towards welding the country together. In the short term they have the opposite



effect because they bring the Northerner face to face with the Southerner on his own door-step and create problems of the kind we have been discussing.

8. I am sending copies of this letter to the recipients of yours.

*Paul*  
*Paul*

P H Scott

c.c. HM Consul-General, NAPLES  
HM Consuls, FLORENCE, GENOA, PALERMO, ~~VENICE~~  
D A Gladstone Esq, WED, FCO



Reference

WRJ. 0142

u 7/8  
Mrs. Corvin,  
Research Department

WRJ 0142	
RECEIVED IN REGISTRY NO. 13	
18 SEP 1979	
DESK OFFICER	REGISTRY
	Action Taken

## THE NORTH/SOUTH DIVISION IN ITALY

1. Please see the attached despatch to Rome from the Consul-General in Milan and Alan Goodison's response. Please also see Mr Gladstone's manuscript note of 31 July.
2. I wonder if I could seek your views, as an expert in Italian affairs, before I approach other departments? On the face of it, it seems to me that the North/South division in Italy is of some general interest and could receive a wider circulation as Mr Gladstone suggests. Regional problems occur in many European countries. Furthermore the North/South divisions in Italy and France are problems of which the European Community has been aware for many years. Perhaps with the entry of Portugal, Spain and Greece, the problem of Mezzogiorno and Midi in Italy and France will take on a new, Mediterranean, aspect. It therefore seems to me that we could well copy this correspondence to departments such as EID(I), EID(E) and FRD here. I could seek the advice of those departments as to whether there are agencies outside the Office, such as the DOT, the MAFF, the DCI, Scottish Office, and perhaps even the Treasury which might like to see the correspondence.
3. Before I go ahead, have you any particular points of your own which I could make about either Mr Scott's Despatch or Mr Goodison's reply? At some point, I shall have to compose a letter from WED to Mr Goodison and your comments would also be of value in that context.

Ronald Nash

R P Nash  
Western European Department  
W65 233 5150

1 August 1979

/P T O

Mr Nash WED

NORTH/SOUTH DIVISION IN ITALY

1. I agree that the North/South division in Italy is of general interest and that the attached papers merit circulation to the departments you suggest. I think the main interest of a wider circulation would centre around EEC enlargement and EID(E) would be particularly interested in this context. When the Community is enlarged the Mezzogiorno will no longer be geographically out on a limb. The whole emphasis of the EEC may well have to change, as you point out, to give more attention to southern problems such as Mediterranean agriculture, and this may give a boost to southern morale.
2. I would endorse your suggestion of circulating the paper to the Scottish Office. When I visited Basilicata in March I was struck by the similarity of the region's terrain and problems to those of Scotland (though the areas have contrasting water supplies). Indeed Dott. Continanza of the Istituto di Ricerche Economiche e Sociali Per la Basilicata expressed interest in visiting Scotland to study how similar problems were being tackled.
3. It is difficult to avoid the impression that the genuine geographical, historical, economic and climatic differences between northern and southern Italy are vastly exaggerated in the minds of the Italians. Superficially the south does not look as backward as one is led to expect. It is the opulence of the north (which is well described by Mr Scott) which makes for the great contrast between the Mediterranean and Northern European aspects of the country and overshadows what the south has to offer. If the south can be developed sensibly, avoiding large and isolated factories, the cattedrali nel deserto, it may well afford a life-style which is different from the north but nonetheless attractive. As Mr Goodison points out there are disadvantages to living in the north, in particular the high level of terrorism. Although devolution of power to the regions appears to have achieved little in concrete terms, and is governed by the restrictions described in Mr Scott's paragraph 9, it has given the southern regions a feeling that at least they have some voice in determining their own future.
4. I found para. 5, where Mr Scott describes Piero Ottone's views, one of the most interesting. These comments would suggest that the North, rather than the South, is out of step with the main body of the country, and makes it even more difficult to know where to look for the "real" Italy. If, as Ottone suggests, the Christian Democrats do not understand the capitalist system, and they have expressed this by the creation of "vast enterprises running at heavy financial loss" for political purposes, perhaps this goes towards explaining why one third of Italian voters are not alarmed by the prospect of the achievement of power by communists who are committed to over-coming capitalism.

5. The south is, and will continue to be very important politically. Many Italians feel that the Mezzogiorno is the key to Italy's future and will determine Italy's place in the modern world. It is also the area in which the voting pattern is rather less stable than in other regions. The communist vote in the south increased particularly in 1976 and fell away again in 1979. It is therefore fertile ground politically.

*Kathryn Colvin*

Mrs Kathryn Colvin  
Atlantic Region  
Research Dept.

7 August 1979