



cc  
R.D.

R

(92)

BRITISH EMBASSY.  
ROME.

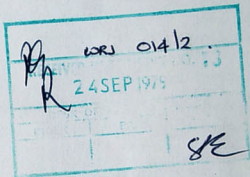
28/8

ENTW

Mr. Neph

21 August 1979

J D Campbell Esq, MBE MC  
British Consulate-General  
NAPLES



My dear John,

1. Thank you very much for your contribution of 6 August to the debate on the north/south division of Italy. I do not think I will add further comment to the correspondence except to say that your contribution has been read with great interest here and I am sending a copy of it to the Foreign Office.

Yours ever,

Alan

A C Goodison

cc: British Consulate-General, Milan  
D A Gladstone Esq, WED, FCO ✓

RESTRICTED

014/14 (4)

BRITISH CONSULATE GENERAL  
NAPLES

6 August 1979

15/8

✓  
to [unclear] 14/8  
Req 15/8

A C Goodison Esq CMG  
British Embassy  
ROME

Noted for  
20th [unclear] 14/8  
and BU to me.

My Dear General

(25)

1. I have read Paul Scott's despatch on the North/South division of Italy with great interest. With my limited experience of Northern affairs confined, apart from my recent contacts with settentrionali expatriates, principally through my sojourn in the North during the war and a number of brief visits since, I generally agree with the views expressed therein. I think however that some comment is called for particularly regarding the speculation it contains about Southern Italian reactions to the Northerners' attitude towards them.

2. I may of course only speak for the 4 most southerly mainland regions of the Mezzogiorno; these latter, as you are well aware, differ vastly from each other not only geographically but in terms of the outlook, habits, even the ethnic background of their inhabitants and Naples, which I naturally know better than the rest of my consular district, is certainly sui generis. Furthermore Southern sentiments about the Northerners while undoubtedly existent are much less widely and regularly expressed than vice versa. There may accordingly be some apparent risk in attempting to generalise. I can nevertheless confidently say that virtually every, certainly every literate Meridionale, is perfectly aware and has been for a long time, of what his Northern compatriots think and say of him. His reaction is at the very most only mildly resentful.

3. Obviously within this overall picture there is a wide range of opinion depending not only on the region of the person holding it, but on his or her social or economic position and educational standard. The most important common factor is objective recognition that the South is economically worse off and less well run than the North. This is also combined to a greater or lesser degree with a none too grudging admiration of Northern business acumen and know-how, even to the extent of favourable comparison with the home product; without however the jealousy which might

RESTRICTED

logically accompany such emotions. None of the above however amounts to recognition that the plight of the Mezzogiorno could even partially be attributable to the failings of its inhabitants. Responsibility for this is firmly placed on history, the politicians, or as some of the Neapolitan societa' put it, not totally in jest, by neglect and exploitation of the "Piemontese invaders".

4. The Southerner is far from being humiliated by Northern contempt; indeed his attitude might be compared with that many years ago of the American South towards the 'Yankees', though with far less hostility. He accepts that his environment may be less comfortable, efficient (or clean - in the case of Naples though by no means necessarily elsewhere) but feels that even if he has something to learn from his detractors he has many qualities far superior to theirs, notably perhaps in the field of human relations. He considers he knows how to live while they, the "polentoni" have no time for anything more than working, money grubbing and eating polenta. (I understand the corresponding epithet in the North is "terroni" or bumpkins.)

5. The point is not whether his pride is justified or not; rather than it is strong enough to insulate him from the effects of ridicule. There is moreover at least some justification for his feelings. For example, many Northern people, not only Italians, might regard the noisy camaraderie of the Neapolitan bassi as anathema or the close-knit communities in poor Lucanian, Apulian and Calabrian villages as archaic, but it is undoubtedly the qualities which these units display which has enabled the people in them to maintain their fortitude and dignity in the face of almost continuous adversity.

6. The negative image of the South is doubtless justified up to a point but far less than anyone who is ignorant of the Mezzogiorno might imagine. Southerners are by and large neither indolent nor incapable but the tendency to become barrackroom lawyers, which is so prevalent, especially among the Neapolitans, has been encouraged by the generous labour laws and made them more difficult than ever to employ. This has been told me on numerous occasions in many different places each time by Northern managers who have however invariably added that once labour problems (which are, incidentally far less serious in smaller concerns) are out of the way the workers, after training, are as good as any in Italy.

7. In the above connection it is often overlooked by critics that a very substantial proportion of the national airframe industry (Aeritalia), both a high technology and very successful one, is situated near Naples and manned almost exclusively by workers from the Province. Reference is far more frequently made to Alfa Sud, the gigantic loss-making enterprise which, admittedly, demonstrates Southern defects, but whose failure is generally accepted as being more fairly attributable to mistaken planning. A lot has changed since Carlo Levi wrote "Christ Stopped at Eboli" though perhaps this is not generally recognized. Industry in the Mezzogiorno by pan-Italian standards is still in its infancy, progress continues to be patchy and many social attitudes which militate against development prevail; against this there are, however, also remarkable examples of prosperity in the South and many individual enterprises, including those employing sophisticated rather than artisan techniques, which are making a positive contribution to the economy and balance of payments. A recent addition to the list has been the Saviem factory near Foggia. This is the exclusive producer of the new range of high speed silent diesel engines being put into Fiat cars and light vehicles. The plant went into production within three years of the laying of the foundations and is manned exclusively by local labour (under Northern management). It is only one of several similar examples which could be quoted.

8. A further point which merits attention concerns Italian institutions. Southern Italians have traditionally played a major role in the civil service and in politics. This does not mean that the dissatisfaction with politicians and the bureaucracy, which is such a feature of Italian life, is not shared to full measure by citizens of the South. They also, however, occupy most of the places in other institutions such as the Carabinieri, which by contrast, command the deep respect of everyone. The Force is certainly a source of pride, not only to those serving, but to their numerous families and communities and does much to offset any inferiority complex. The Navy too, both nationally and internationally, I believe, better regarded than most of the rest of the armed forces, contains a high proportion in its permanent cadre of Southern Italians. Mario Bini, the Florentine 4-Star Admiral who commands NAVSOUTH, told me that while the latter were by far the most difficult to handle, once officers had gained their confidence they made the best sailors of all.

I am surprised that M.C. does not refer to what I believe to be the main theme of the current debate about regional development in the Southern type v. agricultural development + rural industry.

9. It has not been my aim in the last 3 paragraphs above to whitewash my hosts, rather to show that the Northern view of them owes more to prejudice based on the past and the distaste which human beings often feel towards poor relations, than from any knowledge or objective study of the Mezzogiorno today. That they will have both to pay for and to help with rehabilitation process may be an unpleasant reality to them, but they need not worry that their sacrifice and efforts will not bear fruit, at least in so far as this depends on the calibre of Southern manpower.

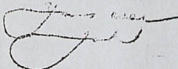
10. It must, in fairness, be recorded that no one living here, however fond they may become of the countryside and the people, can fail to see how Southerners have achieved their bad reputation. They would also, however, I suggest, easily be able in spite of frequent exasperation with unreliability, uncouthness, insincere flattery and bombast, balanced nonetheless by many examples of friendliness, humour and generosity, to perceive qualities which make Southern self-confidence understandable and render it inconceivable that the South is, or ever will become, a fertile breeding ground for terrorists let alone that anti-Northern sentiment could father or motivate them.

11. I am convinced that whatever his faults the Southern Italian is basically non-violent unless very seriously provoked. He is noisy, querulous and difficult but rarely vicious except in a minority of cases, most of which concern the Calabrian mafia, where personal gain or revenge is involved. Crime is on the increase here, except in Basilicata, so it is not strange that the still substantial "emigré" population in the North should have contributed to the latter's statistics. Even in Naples, however, which remains top of the league here, the incidence of violence on a percentage basis is far lower than the average for the country. I should accordingly be very surprised if it were shown that even a sizeable proportion of known terrorists were Southerners. Certainly I have not gained that impression from press reports of convictions, indictments and wanted lists.

12. In conclusion I agree with Paul that the North-South "division" to the extent that it has any real meaning is unlikely to deepen. I have yet to meet any Italian who thinks of himself foremost as anything other than Italian. He will never say, unless asked, that he is e.g. Tuscan or Calabrian in the way that Scotsmen or Welshmen often insist upon their separate identities. Regarding 'racial'

RESTRICTED

antagonism Northern acceptance of the economic situation and their corrective rôle as a fact of life, albeit if accompanied by invective, is matched by Southern lack of resentment based partly on self-confidence or insensitivity and to a lesser extent on native wit which disallows the biting of a helping hand; There is thus little friction. Achievement of the massive Southern development for which the stage has been set and in the face of which are few financial and no political obstacles may well take a long time. There will be many lets and hindrances; the most serious of these may be union inspired labour attitudes which even now are discouraging outside entrepreneurial activity so vital to any real progress here. That the obstacles can, however, be overcome even if not everywhere at the same time, has already been demonstrated and I have no doubt that the process will continue. The economic gap, which remains the prime ingredient of divisiveness, will thus close. I predict however that prejudices will die hard and will still be around long after a far more prosperous South has emerged. By then, though, they will be of even less importance than they are today.



J D Campbell

c.c. Consul General, Milan  
Consuls in Florence  
Genoa  
Palermo  
Venice