The Kingdom of Italy: Unity or Disparity, 1860-1945

Part I: Unification
Fatta l'Italia,
bisogna fare gli italiani.

Having made Italy,
it is necessary to make
Italians.

Massimo d’Azeglio
writer, artist, prime minister
of Sardinia-Piedmont
Risorgimento

- Meaning “resurgence” and implying that a formerly active entity, having fallen into decline, was again gaining strength and power

- Began with the idea of “nationalism” and of an “Italy,” ended with the declaration of the Kingdom of Italy
Part II: The Sources of Disparity
The Sources of Disparity

Geography
Supporting unification

- Clearly defined natural boundaries separating “Italy” from the rest of Europe
Hindering unification

- Some more loosely defined, more porous border areas
• The Apennines as an internal barrier
• Island territories with significant historic differences
• An incomplete territorial unification
• Topography and climate
The Sources of Disparity

Religion
Supporting unification

- The over 90% of “Italians” were Catholic
Hindering unification

- A strong current of anti-clericalism, especially among those most desirous of unification
• Rome the Classical Capital or Rome the center of Catholicism
The Sources of Disparity

Language
19th century nationalism—the ideology behind the drive for independence and unification

Key elements
• People with a common history
• Who shared common aspirations for the future
• Who historically had inhabited a specific area
• And who spoke the same language
It is estimated by the distinguished linguist Tullio de Mauro that only about 2.5% of “Italians” spoke Italian in 1861.

About 630,000 of a population of 25,000,000, the bulk of them in Tuscany and Rome.
• At the time of the declaration of the Kingdom of Italy, nearly 80% of “Italians” were illiterate.

• The illiteracy rate was notably higher in the South, especially among women of all classes.
I PROMESSI SPOSI
STORIA MILANENSE
DEL SECOLO XVII
SCOPERTA E RIFATTA
DA
ALESSANDRO MANZONI.

TOMO PRIMO.

MILANO
PRESSO VINCENZO FERRARIO
A interesting and illustrative sidebar.....

• In 1951, fewer than 20% of Italians used Italian exclusively in their daily life, using dialect within the family, informal conversations with friends, neighbors, the butcher, and even in more formal business dealings with locals.

• In the same year about 13% spoke only dialect

• By 2012 53% of Italians were predominantly speaking Italian in the family home. Meaning that 40% and more still used dialect on a regular basis

• Source ISTAT
The Sources of Disparity

Form of Government
Three visions for a unified Italy

- Neo-guelfism

- Republicanism

- The “home-grown” king
Neoguelfism
The “home-grown” king
Republicanism—the radical solution
The Sources of Disparity

The North-South Split
La questione meridionale
Percent of households living below the poverty line in Italy in 2019 by Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Poverty Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sicily</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calabria</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puglia</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campania</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basilicata</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Molise</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abruzzo</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sardinia</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veneto</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marche</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liguria</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umbria</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lazio</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Piemonte</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lombardia</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toscana</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friuli-Venezia Giulia</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alto Adige-Sud Tyrol</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emilia-Romagna</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Val d’Aosta</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Those highlighted are all considered to be The South (frequently referred to as The South and Islands).

Km of rail lines in 1860

Piedmont 850 km
Lombardy-Venetia 522 km
Tuscany 257 km
Papal State 317 km (year 1870)
Kingdom of the Two Sicilies 128 km
“Otherness”

• An attitude of superiority on the part of Northerners

• In part informed by the 19th century notions of racial stereotypes and the idea of the “fittest”

• Overt condescension and derision by some Northern leaders of the unification movement
• Fesso or Furbo

• Calabresi or Piemontesi
Piemontesizzazione
Meridionalisti

• View unification as a colonial conquest of Southern Italy by Piedmont

• Perceive modern problems as having been created—not just exacerbated—by this process