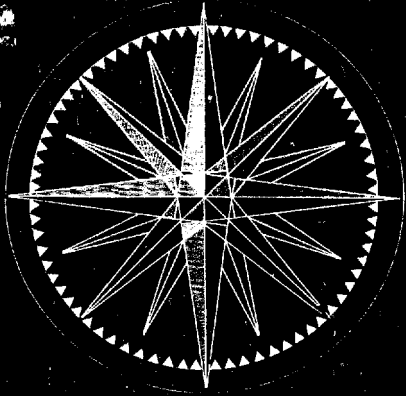


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SPECIAL REPORT

OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

THE QUESTION OF REGIONAL ADMINISTRATIONS IN ITALY

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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THE QUESTION OF REGIONAL ADMINISTRATIONS IN ITALY

Italy's 1947 constitution provides for the establishment of regional administrations throughout the country. The Democratic Socialists and the Republicans, cabinet partners of Premier Fanfani's Christian Democratic Party, as well as Pietro Nenni's Italian Socialist Party (PSI), on which the present center-left government depends for parliamentary support, have insisted that the long-delayed regional administrations be established by the next Parliament. The enacting legislation has heretofore been blocked on the ground that such a system would bring the Communists to power in their areas of local strength. However, Nenni has indicated privately that the PSI would participate in regional governments with its present coalition partners rather than with the Communists, even in those regions where Socialists and Communists together would have a majority. The regional administration question has not been an important issue in the current election campaign, but it could emerge as one of the political stumbling blocks in the formation of a new cabinet.

The constitution drawn up for the new Italian Republic in 1947 divided the country into 19 regions possessing a degree of local autonomy. Although the Christian Democrats had originally been strong proponents of regional autonomy, a series of postwar governments led by them delayed action except with respect to special autonomy for the islands of Sicily and Sardinia and for two border areas largely populated by non-Italians. Legislation setting up the third border region has now been passed by the Fanfani government.

In 1962, as a quid pro quo for Socialist parliamentary support, Fanfani's cabinet presented Parliament with measures designed to implement the regional provisions of the constitution. Early in 1963, however, the

Christian Democrats nearly precipitated a cabinet crisis by refusing to push for legislation in the pre-election Parliament. Party leaders feared right-wing defections if they proceeded before the PSI publicly spells out Nenni's confidential commitment not to form regional governments with the Communists.

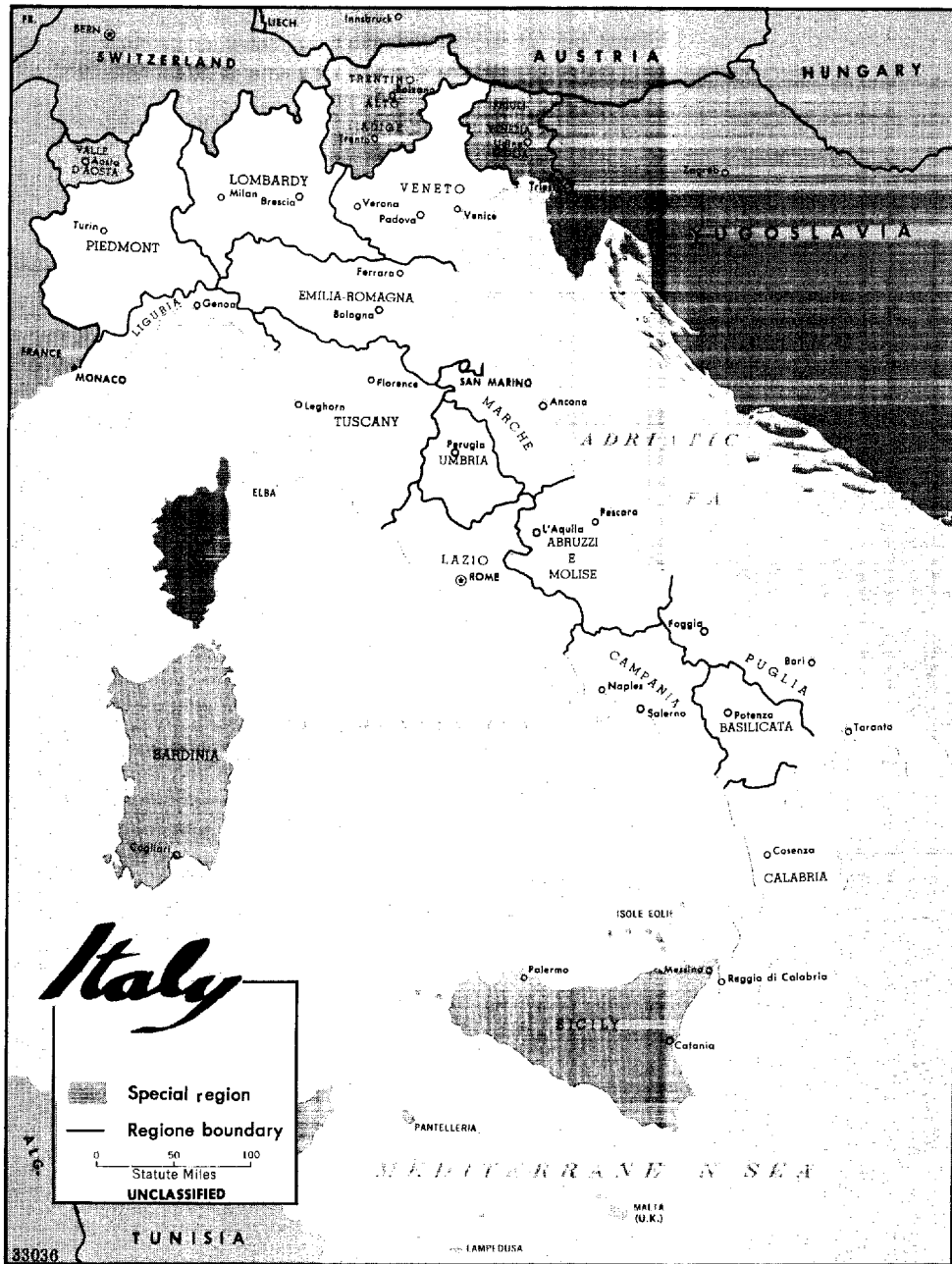
The Christian Democrats' two cabinet partners announced at the close of Parliament that they would withdraw from the coalition if regional legislation is not carried out after the April national elections. Subsequently discussion has largely died out.

Background

Because of geographic differences and long experience

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with foreign administration of different sections of the peninsula, Italians have tended to develop local rather than national allegiances. The 19th-century liberals who brought about the unification of Italy's numerous principalities and states had been afraid of regionalism, and a Napoleonic system of centralized government was instituted by Piedmont, the mother region. Subsequently, the 20th-century liberals, having suffered under the centralized government of Mussolini, saw regional powers as a device by which to thwart future would-be dictators from Rome.

When the Constituent Assembly met in 1946 to draft a constitution for the new republic, there was general agreement in favor of recognizing historic and distinctive geographic areas and administrative units to reduce the power of the national government and maintain stability in the event of its collapse. Another factor which encouraged the assembly to create the regions and to grant them some autonomy was the fear of losing territory: to keep the Aosta Valley in northwest Italy from going to France, the province of Bolzano in the region of the Alto Adige River from being returned to the Austrian South Tirol, and to draw the most favorable frontier possible at the Yugoslav border. In addition, by the end of World War II leaders from the southern island of Sicily were agitating vigorously for independence.

Accordingly, special grants of autonomy were made--first to Sicily by means of a hastily conceived charter in 1946, and two years later to the French-speaking Aosta Valley, to the German-speaking Trentino - Alto Adige area, and to the island of Sardinia. The present Fanfani government has recently passed legislation to set up the Friuli - Venezia Giulia region in the partly Slavic area of northeast Italy, as provided by the constitution.

Regional Powers Envisaged

The Constituent Assembly had apparently been unwilling to grant to the main parts of Italy the degree of autonomy that its policy of appeasement made advisable for the periphery and the constitution denied special privileges to the fourteen regions remaining on the books. In 1953 a measure setting up the institutions and general powers of these regions was enacted but no provision was made for election of administrative regional councils.

The effective difference between the autonomy granted the special regions and that which would be given the other 14 is not yet clear. However, one difference is that the special regions have legislative powers, whereas the rest would have power only to concur in national legislation.

In Sicily, the special region with the greatest degree of local autonomy, the Rome

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government retains power to dissolve the regional assembly, but the regional government has control over even the national police forces in the area. The ordinary regions would have control over only their local police forces, and the state would have a strong check on them through the national supreme court and in other ways (see inset below).

Like other units of local government in Italy, the regions would have limited direct taxing power and percentages of national taxes would be turned over to them. The national government has been extremely liberal in the case of the four special regions already in operation.

The size of the subsidies to the four operating regions vary, however, as do the constitutional formulae for their

calculation. An Italian economist has estimated that if the Trentino - Alto Adige formula were applied uniformly on a country-wide basis the regions would be receiving 10 to 19 percent of the state's annual income. If the Sicilian formula for subsidies should be applied, however, the regions would be spending 61 to 62 percent of the annual Italian national income. North Italy's Piedmont, on the other hand, is one of two or three which give the state more revenue than they receive from it.

After some 15 years during which four regional governments have been in operation, it is difficult to discern a definite pattern in the way these attempts at decentralization are evolving. The Val d'Aosta government appears to have prospered, and to have evolved into what some observers allude to as "a sober government not unlike that of a Swiss canton." The Sardinian regional government appears also to have been run more smoothly than Sicily, although an economic development plan for the area did not get under way until it was pushed by the present national parliament. Trentino - Alto Adige, set up as a result of a treaty with Austria, appears to have been well administered, but ethnic animosities have led to a running dispute with Austria. The least successful of the regional governments has been that of Sicily, where defections by right-wing Christian Democrats brought about a situation providing the Communists with some

THE ITALIAN REGIONAL ADMINISTRATIONS

As provided in principle by the Constitution of 1947, and to be clarified by enabling legislation, each of the 14 regions would elect its own regional council. The council would elect an executive committee, or giunta, which would in turn choose a regional president. This regional government would supervise local economic and police functions and urban affairs, and have responsibility for any changes in city and regional geographic boundaries.

Rome would retain the following checks on these administrations: the Italian Constitutional Court would pass on the constitutionality of regional laws; the President of the Republic would have power to dissolve the regional councils; the government's commissioner in each region would report to Rome on infractions of regional and national law; the national police would retain authority to supersede local police powers.

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success in blocking efforts to isolate them politically.

Points of Controversy

Opponents of the regional system have continued to declare that it will lead to consolidation of control by the Communists in their areas of strength. Others are concerned over the possibility of deadlocks in regional governments because of the possible lack of a political majority as has been the case in various local governments. Others object to interposition of another bureaucratic layer in a red-tape-ridden country, and to the expense entailed. Proponents of the regional government stress the need for democratic decentralization in a traditionally overcentralized state, and for greater government awareness of regional problems. They believe it will be possible to coordinate the activities of the regions through the center-left government's new commission for economic planning.

Proponents of the regional system point to Nenni's offer to form regional administrations along the lines of the present center-left national government and of those now obtaining in most key cities--i.e., alliances including Christian Democrats and Socialists, and excluding the Socialists' former partners, the Communists. They urge that such a situation would loosen the Communist hold on

areas where Socialist support has hitherto been an important factor in Communist strength.

The most important part of the enabling legislation is that relating to financing. This provides that direct revenues will derive from taxes now levied by the townships, while funds provided by the national government would come from real estate and certain indirect taxes and fees, presumably still to be collected by Rome, with distribution based generally on the sums the state now spends in each region for various services. Budget Minister La Malfa, sponsor of this measure and one of the strongest supporters of regional administration, insists that financing the regions would not involve new expense because the state will give only what it already spends. He claims that annual expense for the regions will amount to about 200 billion lire (\$320 million), rather than 800 billion as opponents charge.

With regard to a new bureaucracy, La Malfa figures "maximum personnel" at some eight thousand. He believes the task of the government's new commission for coordinated economic planning, which he heads ex officio, would be facilitated by a regional system which will point up area problems needing government action.

Prospects

The areas where special autonomy is already in effect are too specialized in character to offer a clue as to the success

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or failure of applying somewhat less autonomist regional administration to the rest of the country.

If, as now seems likely, another center-left government is formed again after the election, pressures on the Christian Democrats by their

parliamentary partners may result in the creation of regional administrations throughout Italy, although in view of the general lull of public interest in the matter, the coalition parties may work out some kind of watered-down compromise on the regions.

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