

## Report from Rome by Giorgio Prinzi

### Regional parties spring up

*The leader of a new southern Italian party charges that northern racism and discrimination are spreading.*

Italy is witnessing a resurgence of regionalist and localist movements and political groups, above all in the North. Lately, even the South gives the impression of bringing back the ghosts of the distant past, when Italy, more than a century ago, was not yet a single nation.

At least, that was the impression one got from the formation of the "Lega Meridione-Centro-Sud-Isole (LMcsi)" the League of the Center, South, and Islands. Wanting to get a deeper look, we interviewed the national secretary of LMcsi, attorney Egidio Lanari, at the movement's headquarters in Rome.

We asked him, don't you think the constitution of a southern-Italian movement is anachronistic, in the light of a South which looks toward a modern future as a "bridge" for Europe to the Mediterranean countries?

"I can tell from your question that you have not had a chance to know the reasons for which we were founded. We were forced to do it by the need to contain and put a stop to the growing forms of racism that find expression in organizations like the 'leagues' of the North, which have reached the point of formulating absurd—almost incredible—demands, such as forcing all those who emigrated to the North to go back to the South. Our movement was formed as a positive response, which seeks to reevaluate and make known the immense cultural heritage which the South has given to Italian culture, in order to take arguments away from the provincial racism voiced by those northern leagues,

and not to oppose them on their same, outdated level," explained Dr. Lanari.

"We want to revive awareness of our national identity, starting from the South, from its forgotten traditions in that regard. We look toward Europe, and we are convinced that it will be impossible for people to feel like European citizens, when they don't yet feel like Italian citizens, but only the heirs of this or that presumed provincial, or at most, regional, ethnic background."

Since Italy's economic miracle of the early 1960s, waves of southerners have gone to work in the factories of Milan, Turin, and Genoa—Italy's northern "industrial triangle." Prejudice among north Italians against the newcomers, as intense as racism anywhere, has been fanned by sociologists in the hire of the big multinational financiers, as the "post-industrial society" cuts off opportunities for betterment.

So, we asked Dr. Lanari, you have not set yourselves up as a southern society in the traditional counterposition to the "continent" (as Sicilian and Sardinian islanders used to refer to the Italian peninsula), but in order to finally make Italians. How do you propose to do that?

"By calling upon a strong common moral sense. There can be no nation if there is not also a strong, rooted, sense of the state, of the institutions, of law, of justice. We have been making an effort in this direction since our founding. And so we have become the scourge of immorality, and had frequent recourse to the courts in de-

fense of legality and also of morality."

He cited the recent Rome elections, in which 48,000 phantom votes appeared "by error or by deliberate mischief." Targeting "the crazy spending of the candidates, especially the most visible ones," he said that the LMcsi has called for an inquiry into the campaign funds of these carpet-baggers, which seem beyond their personal resources. Those who cannot show the source of their money ought to be subject to the Rognoni-LaTorre anti-corruption law, and if there were "financial angels" involved, "it would be interesting to know how their generosity is going to be repaid."

Dr. Lanari vigorously denied that the Mafia is a typically "southern Italian" phenomenon. "That's a statement from the past. Today we are simply facing an organized crime phenomenon that cannot legitimately be linked to any geographical area. Lack of respect for the law and corruption are spreading everywhere. I don't understand why a southern businessman who illegally gets a contract must be labeled 'mafioso,' with serious implications even for those who have had the misfortune of having had business dealings with him, while a northern colleague of his who commits the same crime is prosecuted for corruption but with a sympathetic eye for his 'enterprise.'"

He said that his organization intends to promote a referendum to repeal Rognoni-LaTorre, because although it is a national law, "it has ended up being applied not even regionally, but only on the basis of the suspect's birth certificate." In one scandal, "there were many northern companies and businessmen who acted with a sloppiness that would have made their 'mafioso colleagues' of the South blanch. Toward them, the same incriminating yardstick was never applied."