

The Italian Case: Economic Efficiency as a Cultural Diversity

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Introduction

In the last 15 years, in Italy, a vivid debate about Federalism has been taking place. Nevertheless, Italy is a Country ethnically, religiously and linguistically homogenous¹. In general, throughout the Country, the only visible diversities can be categorized as folkloristic ones: not enough to talk about Federalism as a necessity.

Moreover, despite being fractioned for centuries, Italy has always been a Country deeply permeated of classic culture and characterized by a general uniformity of speech and cultural references: even during the ages of the biggest divisions, in fact, there had been a common consciousness of being the principal geographical expression of Latin universe, attested by philosophers and men of letters, who usually referred to the concept of Italy in their works².

Therefore, nowadays, what are the differences that press us to reorganize our young³ Unitarian State?

This work aims to demonstrate that is it possible to find a consistent cultural fraction among Italian regions as a reason for federal instances, assuming that economic efficiency attitude in the way a community behaves can be considered a cultural element. In other words, if tax behaviour of citizens, their perception of benefits from public expenditure and their regard on private enterprise are all cultural elements, as they can be explained as historical issues, it is possible to argue that Italy is culturally fractured and needs a federal reform to find a better order.

The present paper develops that thesis, starting from a brief summary on the Italian decentralisation process between XX and XXI Century; then, an analysis of regional differences is done, focusing on the evidence that, despite Italy is organized in 20 regions, the main fraction concerns the macro-areas of Northern regions and Southern regions⁴. Because of that, in the end of the work, the different ways Federalism reforms are perceived in the North and in the South are investigated.

1 From Regionalism to Federalism, proceeding carefully.

1.1 The debate in the pre-unitarian Italy.

The XIX is the Century of Italian Unity. Firstly thought, theorized and discussed by intellectuals, then realized in four steps between 1848 and 1870⁵.

During the debate for the Italy-making process, some authors were fascinated by the idea of a federal system. Gioberti⁶ proposed a sort of “catholic-federalism” where the Pope would have

¹ The peculiarities of a few border regions (Valle d’Aosta, Trentino-Alto Adige, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Sicilia and Sardegna) have been recognized since the promulgation of the Constitution in 1948.

² As an exemple, in the first lines of the poem “Marzo 1821” the poet Alessandro Manzoni hopes that the river Ticino will no longer be the border of two States because he considers impossible that borders can exist between what he perceives as Italy and Italy.: “Soffermàti sull’arida sponda/ volti i guardi al varcato Ticino/ tutti assorti nel nuovo destino/ certi in cor dell’antica virtù/ han giurato: <non fia che quest’onda/ scorra più tra due rive straniere:/ non fia loco ove sorgan barriere/ tra l’Italia e l’Italia, mai più> (...)”.

³ Italy reached unity in the years 1860/1870.

⁴ The borderline is usually identified as the old border of the Regno delle Due Sicilie and the Church State in 1816.

⁵ 1848, 1859 and 1866 are the dates of the three independence wars against Austria and the 1860 is the date of Garibaldi’s “Spedizione dei Mille”. The total Unity is reached in 1870, with the taking of Rome.

⁶ “*Il Primato morale e civile degli Italiani*”, 1843.

been the head of the system; Mazzini⁷ went near to the XX century solution, thinking of an administrative decentralisation based on a regional system; Cattaneo⁸, instead, dreamt something really modern, a sort of federal liberal order to give every region the possibility to be sufficiently autonomous from the Savoia's power. Actually, all the federal ideas (and Mazzini's regional solution too) were the consequence of a political reflection more than a cultural one⁹.

In fact, the central role of Savoia reigning house in the unitarian process is the main point to focus to comprehend why Federalism was so present in the pre-unitarian debate. In order to reach unity it was necessary, first of all, to defeat the foreign power and to give the control to Italian strongest reigning houses, but, after the Vienna Congress¹⁰, the only Italian independent sovereign was Vittorio Emanuele II¹¹ (and the Pope¹²). This meant that unity would have been possible only as a process of annexation, because it was necessary to give all the power to Savoia's family. This meant to accept paying Italian unity with the total enlargement of a singular regional family's prerogatives: a high price for all the noble families of the rest of the Country.

1.2 Unity and diffidence about regionalism.

In 1865¹³, the law concerning the order of the new State was approved: it specified that Italy would have been organized by the extension of the Savoia centralized model, giving administrative competences to provinces and villages and without providing regions. Eventually, the strong central model seemed the only solution for a weak new born State and neither the proposition of a regional solely administrative organisation¹⁴ was accepted by the Parliament.

The idea of a regional system came back to the politicians' mind years later, when the Fascist deeply-centralized¹⁵ experience ended.

When the Constituent Assembly started its works, in 1946, the federal and regional movements were still vivid. In fact, local autonomy seemed to be the logic response to decades of central authoritarian power as well as the logic solution to the "Southern case"¹⁶. But there were at

⁷ *"Istruzione Generale per gli affratellati nella Giovine Italia"*, 1831. In this work Mazzini clearly explains why a real Federalism is not the right solution for Italy, anticipating the motivations of the Unitarian Parliament: *"La Giovine Italia è Unitaria, perché senza unità non v'è veramente Nazione; perché senza unità non v'è forza, e l'Italia, circondata da Nazioni Unitarie, potenti e gelose, ha bisogno anzitutto d'esser forte; perché il Federalismo (...) la porterebbe sotto l'influenza necessaria d'una o d'altra delle nazioni vicine; perché il Federalismo ridando vita alle rivalità locali oggimai spente, spingerebbe l'Italia a retrocedere verso il Medioevo (...)"*.

⁸ *"Dell'insurrezione di Milano nel 1848 e della successiva guerra"*, 1848.

⁹ It is important to notice that in the works of Cattaneo, the main theorist of Federalism in the Italy of XIX century, the problem of autonomy from the power of one family is stressed as much as (or even more than) the question of cultural diversities: *"Cattaneo's assumption was that Sardinia dominium on Lombardia was not better than the Austrian one"* (my English translation from A. M. Ghisalberti, *"Movimento Nazionale e Popolo (1831-1848)"*. In *La Storia d'Italia*, XVII UTET 2004).

¹⁰ In 1815, at the end of Vienna Congress, Italy was shared in 9 parts: the Lombardo-Veneto was directly annexed to Austria; the Gran Ducato di Toscana, the Ducato di Modena, the Ducato di Lucca, the Ducato di Massa Carrara and the Ducato di Parma e Piacenza were all placed under the Austrian influence; in the Regno delle due Sicilie the Borbone had the power; and then there were the Regno di Sardegna (Savoia) and the Church State.

¹¹ The Regno di Sardegna sovereign.

¹² Actually, the Church State was quite influenced by France.

¹³ Italy was all under Savoia power at that time, excepting for Veneto and Pope's State.

¹⁴ The one of Minister Minghetti, accepted by the Ministers Council in 1861 but refused by Parliament.

¹⁵ Fascism eliminated even the electivity of villages Councils.

¹⁶ The point will be better explained in paragraph 2.2

least two reasons to refuse this solution again: firstly, the weakness of the poor destructed Country; secondly, the relationship among the main parties that participated at the redaction of the Constitution. In fact, they fought a common battle against Fascism but, in the same time, they were really distant and in conflict. As they were all heterogeneously distributed in the territory¹⁷, they all wanted to avoid that, thanks to decentralisation, a sort of Parties' feudalism would be born¹⁸. As happened years before, the reasons to prefer one system or another were merely politic and strategic more than ontological.

The only particular cultural instances that the young State had to face were that of three border regions and of Sardegna and Sicily: for them, in the years 1945/1946, even if the regional debate in the Constituent Assembly was not solved yet, a particular regional order was recognized.¹⁹

Eventually, the Assembly which had to elaborate the Constitution chose a Regional form of organization. In the relation of on. Ruini, the president of the Commission for the Constitution, it is stressed the ideological reason that led to a regional organization; it was the will to pursue an ideal that seemed reachable for the first time in our history: the participation of citizens²⁰. This is comprehensible, by considering that the post World War II period signed the advent of the universal right to vote and the affirmation of one's freedoms.

However, Regionalism in our Constitution was the declaration of a principle more than an organizational choice. In fact, Constituents decided to provide Regions without ruling their institution, leaving to the Parliament this task. That provoked the curious phenomena of a national asset different from Constitutional criteria²¹ for decades, because the Parliament did not work for ruling Regions and for fixing the date of the regional councils elections until 1970²².

This delay had multiple reasons, first of all the circumstance that, in order to enforce the economy, it seemed necessary to keep the power centralized: the Country needed to be rebuilt and the public services needed to be reorganized²³.

1.3 The Nineties

¹⁷ The results of the elections for the Constituent Assembly are indicative, here some data as example: Democrazia Cristiana in Veneto took the 50% ca. of the votes expressed, the Partito Comunista took the 40% ca. of the votes expressed in Emilia Romagna and the Partito Repubblicano has its electoral exploit in Marche (data from P. Corbetta, M. S. Piretti, *Atlante Storico Elettorale d'Italia 1861-2008*. Zanichelli 2009).

¹⁸ S. Ventura quotes Giuseppe Maranini: "What scared was that political fight (...) could lead parties to conceive regions as forts in which take refuge" (my English translation from S. Ventura, *Il federalismo*. Il Mulino 2002).

¹⁹ Authors have different opinions about these recognitions. A. Anzon focuses on the fact that a national law granted that autonomy, while R. Bifulco stresses that the State simply formalized an autonomy that already existed.

²⁰ Here an extract of Ruini's relation: "*It is not only a question of <bringing the government near administrated people>, decentralizing burocracy and administrative power, (...) it is a question of <make the administrated people govern themselves>*" (my English translation).

²¹ Constitution, in its final dispositions, clearly fixed a date (one year after the effectiveness of Constitution) for the election of regional Councils. That date was firstly posticipated and then just ignored.

²² The very first law concerning regions is the 62/1953, "Legge Scelba" (ruling the constitution and the work of regional organs), then, law 108/1968 rules regional elections. These elections are fixed in 1970 and the agreement of regional statues from the Parliament arrives in 1971. The decretos of 1972 and of 1977 realized the passage of functions from State to Regions.

²³ The consequences of Fascism and II World War on Italian economic were dramatic: industry production of 1945 had been ¼ of 1938 production and 1945 agriculture production had been only 55% of 1938 one (datas from S.B. Clough, L. de Rosa "Storia dell'Economia Italiana". Cappelli 1971).

The main factor of the renewed debate about decentralisation in the last decade of XX Century is the malfunctioning of the Governments. In the first 90s, Italy reached its negative best concerning public debt²⁴ and, with a great judiciary work, citizens obtained the proof of the corruption and inefficiency of their representatives²⁵. Moreover Regions, pressed by a centripetal legislation of Parliament and by the egocentric administrative action of Government, became the symbol of the unproductive public expenditure. As a result, politicians and citizens realized that to come out from the crisis it took to elaborate a better organization: politicians and economists looked for a good way to better manage resources and services; citizens, instead, looked for a possibility to keep the power to a level that could be more easily controlled. The consequence of all this is an administrative reform.

With Bassanini laws²⁶ the necessity to give to regions administrative competences as much as possible was stressed, assuming that Regions needed all the administrative powers to cure the interests of their communities and that Government action ought to be guided by Subsidiary principle.

This reform had the merit of inverting the distribution of functions: they were all assigned to the Regions and the local administrations and the role of the Government was exceptionally provided for a few enumerated functions.

At the same time a debate concerning the possibility of change the Constitution developed²⁷.

It seemed necessary to give coherence to the ordainment, in order to grant to the great reforms of power sharing the Constitutional affirmation they needed.

Because of that, between 1999 and 2001 the reform of the Title V of Constitution was approved²⁸.

It consists of two Constitutional Laws. Law 1/1999 concerns regional asset, i.e. the statute autonomy, the form of government and the electoral law. Law 2/2001, instead, concerns the relationship between State and Regions.

The first great change is in art. 114: it says that the Italian Republic is constituted by Villages, Provinces, Towns, Regions and the State²⁹. This means that State and Autonomies are in the same relationship with Republic, being its forma. Then, the law innovates in the legislative and administrative distribution of power. Focusing only on the first one, it can be noticed that the new art. 117³⁰ states that the State has 17 specific exclusive competences (enumerated in the second paragraph) and that there is a concurrent³¹ legislative competence for the 20 subjects of another list (third paragraph). Every other subject is completely regulated by regional laws (fourth paragraph).

²⁴ In 1994 the data of public debt/GDP has been 121,8% (source ISTAT).

²⁵ Between 1992 and 1994, because of Mani Pulite operation, there have been 2565 (among politicians and administrators) people under investigation and 1408 condemnation or plea-bargaining (source www.archivistorico.corriere.it).

²⁶ Law 59/1997, law 127/1997 and law 191/1998.

²⁷ It has to be mentioned the effort of the Commissione Bicamerale D' Alema (1997) in elaborating reform propositions that gave inspiration to the Constitutional Law 2/2001.

²⁸ Firstly by Parliament, secondly by a confirmative Referendum in October.

²⁹ Old version of 114 was "Republic is divided in Regions, Provinces and Villages".

³⁰ Old version of 117 provided only a limited list of concurrent competences, giving the rest to the State power.

³¹ The State fixes principles and the Region regulates specifically.

Generally, this kind of asset, with residual competences to autonomies, is recognized by a univocal doctrine as an element of a Federal Systems³². But in this case definitions are difficult to be done, especially because of the work of Constitutional Court. In fact, despite the strength of Constitutional changes, the Constitutional Court assumed the role of central prerogatives tutor, often solving cases of conflict in favour of the State.

In Italy, Court's sentences have a crucial hermeneutical role over the Constitution and, because of that, it is necessary to know them to have a clear picture of the national order. In this particular case, sentences help to have an idea of attribution of functions³³ and to comprehend the real meaning of every single legislative competence distribution criteria³⁴.

1.4 Brand new change

Some years later, after a tentative to "reform the reform"³⁵, the last great reform has been done: 2009 is the year of Fiscal Federalism.

It is a reform that invests resources instead of competences. The main aspect is the provision of regional tributes that are directly managed by Regions³⁶. The aim is to reward efficient regions with the possibility to manage their income and to press inefficient regions to cut extra expenditures³⁷.

Nevertheless, Italy has a great disproportion between fiscal capacity of the North and of the South. Because of that, in order to insure equity, equalization is provided. In particular, the law provides two kinds of equalization funds. One will serve to grant the minimum levels of services in the poorest regions: the quote for every region is calculated as the difference between the standard cost of the basic services and the fiscal entries from participated tributes. The other represent the remedy for differences: the quote is calculated as the difference between the medium value of the entries granted by the participation to personal income tribute and the regional value of that entry. In this way an equilibrium is pursued, because the quote is received by Regions with the minor fiscal capacity in relation to other Regions' fiscal capacity and not in relation to their basic necessities (as for the first fund).

2 Reasons for Federalism

³² For R. L. Watts also the residual power given to central state can be a characteristic of federal systems, but specifically of that be born by a decentralisation of functions. (R. L. Watts, "*Comparing Federal Systems*". Montreal 2008.).

³³ For instance, sent. 303/2003: it introduces the concept of "attraction for subsidiarity" that means that if a service must be offered in a unitarian way, State attracts this administrative power and, consequently, obtains also the relative legislative power.

³⁴ For instance, sent. 407/2002: it specifies that the 17 exclusive competences of State are not only "subjects" but, more extensively, "values" that for their nature can often be linked with other subjects, attracting them into central law.

³⁵ A Constitutional Law approved by Parliament (it provided, among all, a Federal Senate, a list of exclusive regional competences and a role for regional representants in the election of Constitutional Court members) but refused by citizens in June 2006 with a referendum.

³⁶ And the Regions participate, as already happened, to certain State tributes.

³⁷ Sicily and Veneto has about the same population but an astonishing different number of Public Administration workers: 133.000 for Sicily while 75.000 for Veneto (source ISTAT 2003).

2.1 Insufficiency of ethnical and cultural motivations

When Prince Metternich³⁸ said that Italy was a “geographical expression”³⁹ he maybe did not realize that, focusing its fractions and its multiple realities, he was recognising its existence.

Nowadays, after about 200 years from Vienna Congress, Italy presents deep Unitarian characters.

Firstly: language. Italy is a Country full of dialects characterizing every little community. They can be very different one another, often reflecting the language of the past dominants. Anyway, since Dante made his trips around Central and North Italy to write his *Commedia*, the language of men of letters has been the same: literary Italian has been existed for Centuries. And, because of that, when the alphabetisation of the Young State started, nobody had doubts about the language to teach.

Secondly: etnies. The most recent lasting invasion Italy remembers is that of Normans in XI century. After that, strangers came to Italy exclusively as sovereigns or tourists⁴⁰.

Thirdly: culture⁴¹. Even not saying about the mark⁴² that one millennium of Roman power leaded on Italy, it is to be recognized that Catholic Church created a general cultural uniformity, both in the sense of minimal culture and artistic one. For the first kind, it must be remembered that for Centuries alphabetization was assured by Religious institutions and that often churches were the only organized presences in little villages, having great influence and becoming the maximum expression of power in that territory. For the second one, it has to be said that Popes, above all, contributed to the mobility of artists since 1300⁴³, being the most rich and exacting commitments of every age.

2.2 Economic differences: the atavistic diversity between North and South.

During the debate about Unity, the problem of the huge economic difference between North and South⁴⁴ was analytically focused for the first time, introducing the concept of “Southern Case”.

It concerns the evidence of the weakness of Southern economy and can be explained as an historical phenomenon. In fact, after the shadows of High Medieval Age, the South did not live a remarkable Communal experience⁴⁵, and therefore it had not the possibility to develop a consistent civic fabric⁴⁶. On the contrary, it experienced a durable feudal experience that influenced dramatically the connection between people, estate and power. Furthermore, because of its

³⁸ K. W. N. L. Metternich (1773/1859), the Austrian diplomatic player in Vienna Congress.

³⁹ Definition contained in a note to Count Dietrichstein of August the 2nd 1847.

⁴⁰ What is called French invasion (1494) can not be considered a real invasion in the massive sense it is focused on the paper.

⁴¹ In the sense of cultural references, values and religion.

⁴² For example, in administrative organization (even today we refer to *questori* to indicate particular public officers) or in law (categories, crucial concepts).

⁴³ We can appreciate Giotto’s creations in Padua as in Assisi.

⁴⁴ There is not a fix border, because it changed times to times in relation with dominions. Anyway, it is possible to indicate, approximately, a geographical border in the Garigliano river and in the Tronto river. This geographical border reflects the political borders of Regno delle Due Sicilie after Vienna Congress.

⁴⁵ That area was too much influenced by Byzantine and Arabian centralizing traditions. Only few cities, these with the strongest bourgeoisie (as Naples, Amalfi, Bari and Messina), had an experience comparable to that of Northern cities.

⁴⁶ “Mezzogiorno (questione del)” in Rizzoli Larousse, vol X, 1964.

geographical position, it did not take advantage of the European commercial development, reflecting that in a little, poor market. This difficult situation worsened with Bourbon domination, which started in XVI century. In that period, Spain was a decadent Country⁴⁷ and reflected this in Southern Italy administration.

All these elements deeply influenced Southern economic and -as a consequence- civic culture. The lack of a Communal experience denied the possibility to comprehend the opportunities and the consequences of civic participation. This has to be summed up with the lasting feudal phenomenon and with the bad Bourbon administration: the result is a completely distrust in central power; in vertical organization, using modern terms. Another result -correlative to the first- is the developing of horizontal organizations, parallel to civic belonging: family, above all; clans, when family were large or there was a strong village identity. But also brigandage or maphia, when clans were in contrast or looked for an affirmation⁴⁸.

Living for ages under a power oppressive and tormenting has two crucial consequences. Firstly, people become sceptic about power and not collaborative to it. Secondly, if power is not capable to organize society but, on the contrary, is only capable to bestow, economic initiative does not grow easily.

Nowadays, these two conclusions are well demonstrated by a high propensity to fiscal evasion and by a lack in economic activities. Regarding fiscal evasion, the IRAP evasion intensity data⁴⁹ are astonishing: in Campania and in Puglia, for every 100 euro declared to be taxed, 60 are hidden. In Calabria, the evasion intensity reaches the 93,8%⁵⁰. For what concerns economic initiative, Sicily high and medium high technology manufacturing are less than 10% of Veneto ones⁵¹.

In the end, historical issues led to diversity in the economic behaviour. In other words, there is a remarkable cultural difference in economic approach between the North and the South of Italy.

Consequently, if the problem is economic, the answer cannot be simply administrative or legislative. It is for this reason that both the administrative reform of 1998 and the legislative power sharing reform of 1999/2001 had not been considered federal reforms. They affirm important principles as the delegation of all administrative power and residual legislation to local autonomies, but are not a proper solution to this kind of diversity problem.

The autonomy Regions look for is an economic one. Because of that, the first reform in which the term "federalism" has been used is the Fiscal one. And it is not only a question of terms: it is the first reform really perceived by citizens as a gain in autonomy. Furthermore, probably Italy would be considered a Country towards federalism even without 1999/2001 reform. That is surprising, by considering that the Fiscal reform is not a change in Constitution, as happened in 1999/2001 for legislative power sharing reform. But it can have an explanation: administrative and legislative reforms granted autonomy from the centre, the fiscal one, instead, gives the perception of

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁸ Affirmation, in a context of poverty, just attains to the control of the territory.

⁴⁹ Average data from 1998 to 2002 (in S. Pisani, C. Polito "Analisi dell'evasione fondata sui dati IRAP, 1998-2002", Documenti di Lavoro dell'Ufficio Studi dell'Agenzia delle Entrate, 2006).

⁵⁰ The other Southern regions data are: 65,8% for Sicily, 54,6% for Sardinia and Molise, 49,7% for Basilicata and 33% for Abruzzo.

⁵¹ In Sicily they are 32848 and in Veneto 208803, according to OECD 2007 data.

autonomy from the other regions. In fact, in a central asset (before 1998), while function managing or a particular subject discipline were decided by the parliament in a supreme position, economic choices were too much influenced by the exigencies of critical areas. On the contrary, with this fiscal reform, “standard cost” criteria of equalization safeguards richest regions income from State weakness in imposing transfers limits at the poorest ones.

3 The Italians and Federalism

Another important remark concerns the Country asset. It is clear, in fact, that the difference is not regional, but macro regional. North and South have a different economic culture. That is crucial, despite all the particular differences of the twenty regions.

3.1 Federalism, northern view: Spartacus.

As remarked, the consciousness of a “Southern case” exists since XIX century. Since Unity, lots of paternalistic attempt to solve the question were carried out. The most important steps were the assignment of a special budget for these problems⁵², in 1950, and the appointment of proper Minister for South⁵³, since 1960.

If a sort of South-care politic has been existing for decades, why does North recently fed up about it?

The situation started changing at the end of Eighties, when Italian Politic reached its worst.

As has been said before, corruption, bad management of resources and an unbelievable public debt awoke citizens. In particular, North citizens had been stimulated by a new born party that had a rigid position against old establishment: the Lega Nord. It stood for political election in 1992⁵⁴, a politic period of empty spaces⁵⁵, and represented the container of all the angry of lots of citizens. This was the first manifestation of a discomfort called “Northern Case”.

Probably, the episode that most of all influenced northern public opinion toward the exigency of a federal reform has been the “Tax for Europe” that in 1996 had been established to adjust the public budget to reach Maastricht parameters. It was a *una tantum* tax that served to correct Italian deficit from 7% of 1996 to <3% of 1997.

Incredibly, statistical data revealed that Northern Regions were so productive that their GDP not only would be good enough to enter in Europe, but was one of the highest of all the UE⁵⁶.

This gave to northern citizens the numeric consciousness of their sacrifices for the South and represented the first great reason to ask for a change.

⁵² The “Cassa per il Mezzogiorno”, law 10/08/1950. It would have to last a decade, but after 1960 it has been prolonged.

⁵³ The “Ministro per il Mezzogiorno e le zone depresse”, then “Ministro per gli interventi straordinari nel Mezzogiorno”. He existed until 1991.

⁵⁴ Obtaining an astonishing 8% of votes.

⁵⁵ Craxi and its Socialist Party were swept away from Mani Pulite (the judiciary hurricane of 1992); the Democrazia Cristiana, the most important party of the first half Century of Republic, ended its path in 1994; the Comunist Party had been dissolved in 1991, because of the left wing crisis that 1989 led, bearing new left realities that had to find their identity. In a recent article about Federalism (on La Stampa, July the 30th), Luigi La Spina notices that after the Nineties, all the parties that participated to the Constituent debate –Union and Regions, South help etc.- have dissolved. As a consequence, there is now a sort of lack in unity-of-the-State consciousness.

⁵⁶ GDP calculated per capita at the standard of purchasing power revealed that in 1994 North Italian Regions GDP was 20.435.000 Liras, while German one was 18.321.000 Liras (source EUROSTAT).

As Spartacus, the roman slave that lead the rebellion, Federalism represents for the Northern a ransom to their past efforts and an insurance that for the future burdens would be shared in a different way.

3.2 Federalism, Southern view: Charon or Thaumaturge King?

Usually, the federal debate is faced in terms of Northern autonomy, because these regions were the first to present federal instances. But it is truly interesting to analyze what does the South think about it.

Historically, the most important trend of opinion has been the “Meridionalismo”⁵⁷.

It is an intellectual movement born after Unity, with the consciousness of a South emergency. It stresses the rapacious policy of first years of Unity, responsible of stifling southern little innovations⁵⁸. Because of that, the propositions to evolve have been all characterized by the need for a paternalistic help from the centre, in particular through protectionism of Souther economy⁵⁹. Nowadays, the idea that the South needs the central help and that Federalism⁶⁰ would be dangerous for its economy is still largely diffused. Federalism seems Charon: it will lead poorest regions into hell, having fewer resources than before but the same inefficient administrators managing them.

To tell the truth, a trend of opinion favourable to Federalism exists even in the South.

It is a movement that addresses the inefficiency of local administrators as the first problem to solve to react, instead of hoping that a good economy and consequent richness will change administrators’ mind: making administrators responsible for the resources is fundamental to press them and starting an efficiency renewal. This concept of autonomy as the route for benefit is shared by some autonomist movements that developed in the last decade⁶¹. The idea can be synthesized in this way: if the North does not want to pay for the South inefficiency, the South does not want to be inefficient because someone always pay for it. In this optic, Federalism is a Thaumaturge King that cures with the medicine of administrators’ responsibility the worst trouble of Southern Italy: inefficiency.

4 Conclusions

As stressed, Italian cultural diversity between North and South exists, but it specifically concerns –as illustrated- economic culture. That difference has well defined historical reasons but has become a cause of conflict in the last decades, when Northern regions reached the consciousness that they were paying for a national crisis that was, actually, a Southern one.

Starting by the assumption that decentralization is the solution to make diversities coexist peacefully, Italy reorganized itself through three attempts. Firstly Parliament focused administrative functions, then legislative competences and, few months ago, it tried to solve the problem of the

⁵⁷ Lots of important intellectuals participated to the movement: P. Villari, S. Sonnino, L Franchetti etc.

⁵⁸ The most radicals, as A. De Viti De Marco, criticized all the process of industrialisation, affirming that South would have resisted as an agricultural economy.

⁵⁹ This was the idea f N. Colajanni

⁶⁰ Fiscal one.

⁶¹ The Movement for Autonomies (MPA) of R. Lombardo is a Sicilian new born movement that has obtained good electoral results in recent years. It is linked with Lega Nord, representing its complementary instances.

relationship between income and resources. The third one is the most suitable of the three solutions, because it hits exactly the point of contrast.

So, Italy is now going to organize its taxation system in a federal way.

A federal asset would give to the Northern Regions the possibility to benefit from their efficiency and to the South the opportunity to choose: to go on with an inefficient system, though having fewer subsidies from the centre, or to make a cultural revolution, comprehending that citizens have the power to change, by choosing virtuous administrators.

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