

## OH! ITALIA, ITALIA!

Guilds are a very powerful voice in Italy. Newspapers, for instance, can be sold only by authorized newsstands. The list goes on and on. The government is now trying to break them and introduce more competition.

Italy is still anchored in a medieval mindset when guilds were authorized to set standards and protect professional interests.

Following the fall of the Roman Empire, Italy has been constantly devastated, women raped, men tortured, cities destroyed and rebuilt-to-be-destroyed-again for almost 2000 years. The last event was WWII.

Attila, Germans, Swedes, Muslims, Greeks, Spanish, and English found Italy an attractive battleground. The Italians answered by building hilltop castles.

Italy's main historical problem has been its failure to unite when other nations (France, Spain, England, and Germany) did. They chose to fight against each other.

Italy had two hundred years of glory: the Renaissance. Commerce through Venice, and then Genoa, Pisa, and Amalfi created unprecedented wealth.

The Medici family in Florence seized the opportunity and created the banking system to finance trade with India and China through the Middle East.

Money discovered and financed genius. It always does. The world could thus enjoy and benefit from such giants as Michelangelo, Leonardo, and Galileo.

But the tight grip of the church, the discovery of America, and the rounding of the Cape of Good Hope put the Italian merchants out of business.

The Renaissance waned. Knowledge and money moved north. Bach, Mozart, Kepler, and Newton were some of the offspring of the Italian genius.

The Italians failed to unite once again. The Church emerged one more time as the surviving power. And for another four centuries Italians managed to remain afloat.

Long live the guilds, the last remnants of a medieval mindset Italy failed to overcome!

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Since 1977

7-24-06