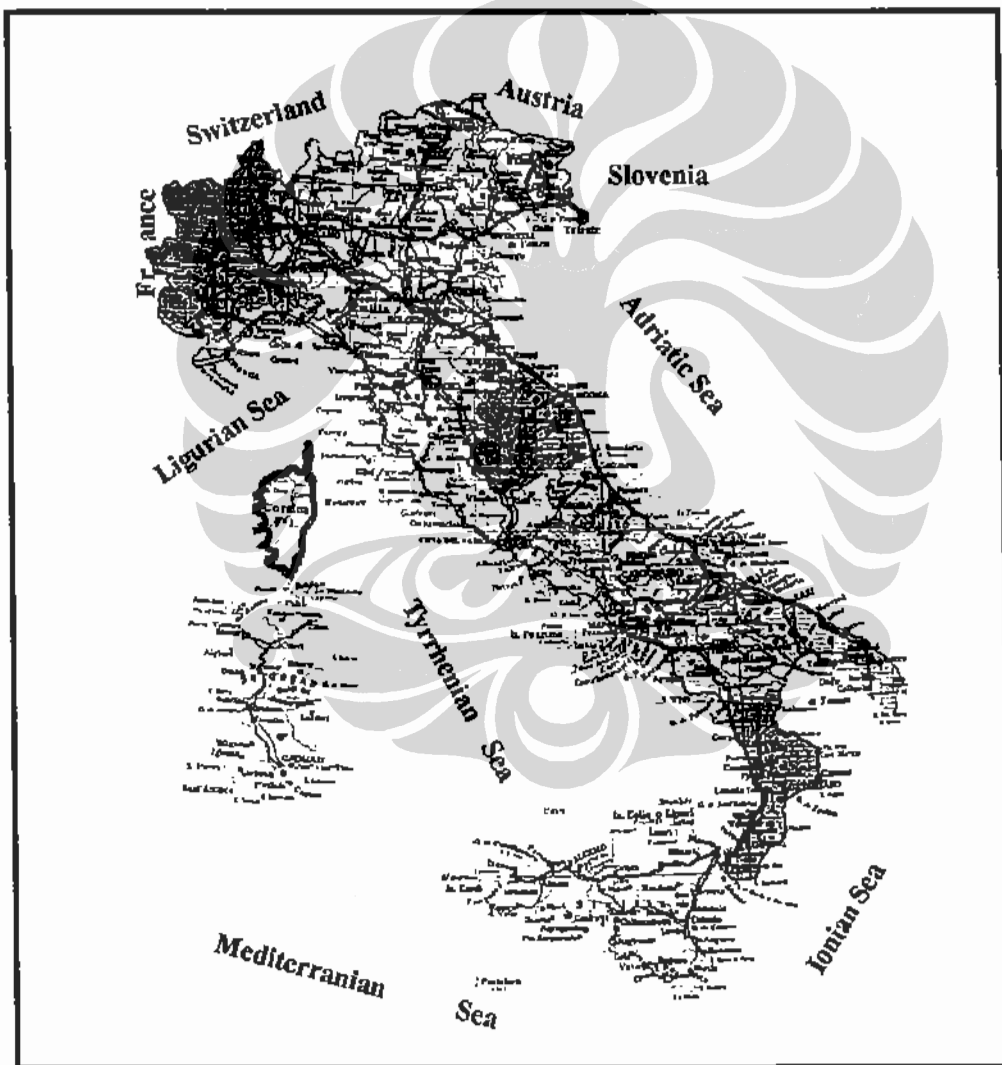


# Italy – A Step Closer

✓✓

**OSTELIO REMI**

Director-Cultural Attache, Italian Institute of Culture, Jakarta



### Background

Italy always refers to deep history, beauty, architecture, culture and old civilization. Located in south central Europe, Italy consists of a peninsula shaped like a high-heeled boot and several islands encompassing 116,300 square miles (301,200 square kilometers). The Mediterranean Sea is to the south, and the Alps to the north. A chain of mountains, the Apennines, juts down the center of the peninsula. The fertile Po valley is in the north. It accounts for 21 percent of the total area; 40 percent of Italy's area, in contrast, is hilly and 39 percent is mountainous.

The Romans used the name Italia to refer to the Italian peninsula. Additionally, Italy has been invaded and settled by many different nations and people. Etruscans in Tuscany

preceded the Romans and Umbria, while Greeks settled the south. Jews entered the country during the period of the Roman republic and Germanic tribes came after the fall of Rome. Mediterranean people (Greeks, North Africans, and Phoenicians) entered the south. The Byzantine Empire ruled the southern part of the peninsula for five hundred years, into the ninth century. Sicily also had many invaders, including Saracens, Normans, and Aragonese. In 1720, Austrians ruled Sicily and at about the same time controlled northern Italy. There is subsequently a continuing ethnic and culture mixing.

### Emergence of the Nation

"...a careful study of the archaeological evidence is sufficient to persuade us that both the



The Etruscan

predominant role and the absolute chronological priority in the formation of the civilization of ancient Italy belong to the Etruscans". – The late Massimo Pallotino

Italy's history is long and great. The Etruscans were the first major power in the Italian peninsula and Italy was first united politically under the Romans in 90 B.C.E. After the collapse of the Roman Empire in the fifth century C.E., Italy became merely a "geographic expression" for many centuries. Chaos followed the fall of the Roman Empire. Charlemagne restored order and centralized government to northern and central Italy in the eighth and ninth centuries. Charlemagne brought Frankish culture to Italy, and under the Franks, the Church of Rome gained more political influences. The popes were given a great deal of autonomy and were left with control over the legal and administrative system of Rome.

It was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that Italy as we know it today came to be. Until that time, various city-states occupied the peninsula, each operating as a separate kingdom or republic.

Forces for Italian unification began to come together with the rise of Victor Emmanuel to the throne of Sardinia in 1859. That year, after the French helped defeating the Austrians, Victor Emmanuel's prime minister, Count de Cavour of Sardinia, persuaded the rest of Italy except the

Papal States to join a united Italy under the leadership of Victor Emmanuel in 1859. In 1870 Cavour managed to be on the right side when Prussia defeated France and Napoleon III, the Pope's protector, in the Franco-Prussian War. On 17 March 1861, Victor Emmanuel of Sardinia was crowned as king of Italy. Rome became the capital of the new nation.

### **Culture & Civilization**

Italy was home to many well-known and influential European civilization, including the Etruscan, Greeks and the Romans. It has shaped the cultural and social development of the whole Mediterranean, deeply influencing European culture as well.

Having been a seminal place for many artistic and intellectual movements that spread throughout Europe and beyond including the Renaissance and Baroque, Italy's greatest cultural achievements lie in its long artistic heritage. Beyond arts, Italy's contribution to the realms of literature and architecture cannot also be overlooked. One step further to our modern era, Italy's contribution to the culture and civilization of the whole Europe remain immense, including that on fashion, food, and lifestyle.

### **Literature**

Italian literature has its roots in Roman and Greek literature. In the thirteenth century Sicilians composed the earliest poetry written in Italian

at the court of Frederick II. This poetry was a courtly poetry, following the Provençal models closely. When the Hohenstaufen dynasty fell in 1254, the capital of Italian poetry moved north. There were poets before Dante, especially Guittone d'Arezzo and Guido Guinizelli, the founder of the *dolce stil nuovo*—sweet new style. Dante's *La Vita Nuova* (1292) is in this style, and it influenced Petrarch and other Renaissance writers. At about the same time as the *dolce stil nuovo* appeared, Saint Francis of Assisi began another type of poetry, a devotional style filled with love for all of God's creatures. Dante's greatest work was *La Divina Commedia*.

The fifteenth century was the period of High Renaissance such as Michelangelo, Leon Battista Alberti,

and Leonardo da Vinci while the first major Italian drama was *Orfeo* (c. 1480) written by Angelo Poliziano. In the sixteenth century, Italy rose to great improvement in literature with the writing of Pietro Bembo, Nicolo Machiavelli, and Ariosto. Machiavelli is best known for *The Prince* (1640), the first realistic work of political science and a call for Italian unity. Ariosto's poem, *Orlando furioso* (1516) is an epic dealing with Charlemagne, an old theme but with a new sophistication. There were numerous fine works written during the century.

The seventeenth and eighteenth century started with a decline in the standard of living in Italy. Trade shifted to the Atlantic and Italy was under the political domination of



Spain, France, and Austria. It was also the period of the baroque of which one of the greatest works of the period is Giambattista Marino's *Adone* (1623). The common characteristics of the works in these centuries are depressive and gloomy.

The next century was a movement period towards simplicity, the Arcadia movement. It was a period of naivete in style and simplicity in narrative. Here there were many Greek models were used, this period was also influenced by the French Enlightenment.

The nineteenth century was the century of the Risorgimento. Giacomo Leopardi wrote magnificent lyric poems showing great feelings and deep nationalism. Alessandro Manzoni's *I promessi sposi* (1825–1827) is a great work of nationalistic fiction. Manzoni called for a return to the pure Tuscan dialect. However, nationalism also inspired a realist movement that extolled the beauty of regional dialects and life.

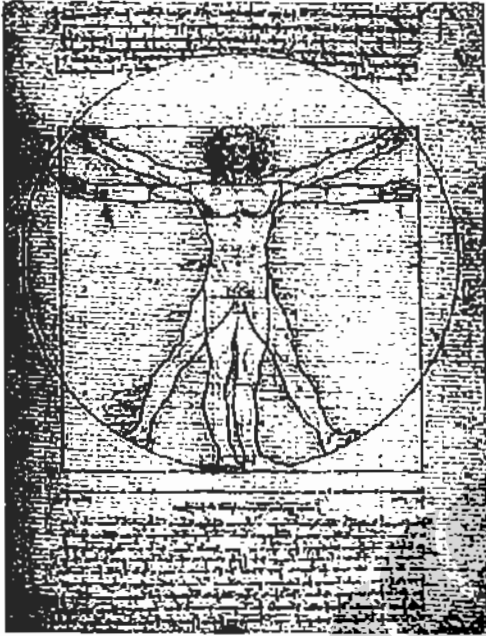
Various and different styles were born in early twentieth century. Gabriele D'Annunzio, who began writing in the previous century, had great influence in the twentieth century. Benedetto Croce and others carried on the work of modern thought in Italy. Luigi Pirandello, a 1934 Nobel Prize winner, was an innovator in style and thought. Fascism threatened to destroy Italian literature and many of its great

writers went abroad.

After World War II Italian literature blossomed again. A simple list of major figures is more than enough to see the importance of modern Italian literature. In poetry, there are Giuseppe Ungaretti, Eugenio Montale, and Salvatore Quasimodo. In fiction, there are Carlo Levi, Elio Vittorini, Vasco Pratolini, Mario Doldati, Cesare Pavese, Vitaliano Brancati, Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, Alberto Moravia, Giorgio Bassani, Dino Buzzati, Elsa Morante, Natalia Levi Ginzburg, Primo Levi, and Umberto Eco.

#### Arts

Italians are proud of their artistic heritage and the history of Italian graphic arts is at least as long as that of literature. Italian artists such as Michelangelo, Leonardo, Fra Angelico, Raphael, and numerous others are known throughout the world. Remains of Greek and Etruscan material culture are found throughout the south and middle of the peninsula. Roman antiquities are also found everywhere. Pompeii and Herculaneum are famous for their well-preserved archeological remains. The city of Rome is itself a living museum. Throughout the country there are churches, palaces, and museums that preserve the past. There are over 35 million art pieces in its museums. Moreover, Italy has 700 cultural institutes, over 300 theaters,



and about 6,000 libraries holding over 100 million books.

The museums in Italy are world famous and contain many important collections of artifacts from ancient civilizations. Taranto's museum, for example, offers material to explore deeply the history of Magna Grecia. The archaeological collections in the Roman National Museum in Rome and the National Archaeological Museum in Naples are probably among the world's best. Others, the Etruscan collections in the National Archaeological Museum of Umbria in Perugia, the classical sculptures in the Capitalize Museum (Museo Capitolino) in Rome, and the Egyptian collections in the Egyptian Museum in Turin are, perhaps, the best such

collections in the world.

Apart from the classical age, the Italian Renaissance is also well represented in a number of museum, to name the few are the Uffizi Gallery (Galleria degli Uffizi), Bargello Museum (Museo Nazionale del Bargello), and Pitti Palace Gallery (Galleria di Palazzo Pitti, or Galleria Palatina) which all located in Florence.

Italian music has been one of the major glories of European art. The musical influence of Italian composers, such as Monteverdi, Palestrina and Vivaldi set the base for the composers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, on the other hand Italian romantic opera flourishes under composers like Gioacchino Rossini, Giuseppe Verdi, Giacomo Puccini, Gaetano Donizetti and Vincenzo Bellini. Contemporary Italian artists, writers, filmmakers, and composers also contribute significantly to western culture.

#### *Architecture*

It is believed that the two most well known types of Italian architecture are Roman and Palladian.

#### *Roman architecture*

The Romans achieved originality in building very late in their existence; for the whole of the republican period, Roman architecture was a nearly exact copy of that of Greece, aside from the Etruscan contribution of the arch, and its later three-dimensional counterpart, the dome. The only two



developments of any significance were the Tuscan and Composite orders; the first being a shortened, simplified variant on the Doric order and the Composite being a tall order with the floral decoration of the Corinthian and the scrolls of the Ionic.

Roman architecture represents a fusion of traditional Greek and Etruscan elements, with new structural principles based on the development of the arch and of a new building material, concrete, a stronger available

substitute for stone. This invention of concrete took place in the first century BC. Tile-covered concrete quickly replaced marble as the primary building material and more daring buildings soon followed, with great pillars supporting broad arches and domes rather than dense lines of columns suspending flat architraves. The freedom of concrete also inspired the colonnade screen, a row of purely decorative columns in front of a load-bearing wall. In smaller-scale

architecture, concrete's strength freed the floor plan from rectangular cells to a more free-flowing environment.

On return from campaigns in Greece, the general Sulla returned with what is probably the most well-known element of the early imperial period: the mosaic, a decoration of colorful chips of stone inset into cement. This tiling method took the empire by storm in the late first century and the second century and in the Roman home joined the well known mural in decorating floors, walls, and grottoes in geometric and pictorial designs.

We can find beautiful Roman architectural buildings everywhere in Italy, and perhaps, among the famous one is The Pantheon.

The Pantheon is a building located in Rome which was originally built as a temple to the seven deities of the seven planets in the Roman state religion, but then becomes the Christian church since the 7<sup>th</sup> century. It is the best preserved of all Roman buildings and the oldest important building in the world with its original roof intact. And one most important thing is that it has been in continuous use throughout its history.

The original Pantheon was built in 27 – 25 BC under the Roman Empire, during the consulship of Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa. Agrippa's Pantheon was once destroyed by fire in AD 80 and then rebuilt in about 125, during the reign of the Emperor



Leonardo da Vinci statue outside the Uffizi, Florence

Hadrian. Not until the year of 609 when the Byzantine emperor Phocas gave the temple to Pope Boniface IV that the building becomes the Christian Church.

Apart from being regarded as the Christian church as today, the Pantheon has been used as a tomb long since the Renaissance. Among those buried, there are the painters Raphael and Annibale Caracci, the architect Baldassari Peruzzi and two kings of Italy: Vittorio Emanuele II and his queen, Margherita, and Umberto I.

In terms of architectural structure, the building is circular with a portico of three ranks of huge granite Corinthian columns under a pediment





opening into the rotunda, under a coffered concrete dome with a central opening (oculus), the Great Eye, opens to the sky. The dome is the largest surviving from the antiquity and is the second largest dome in Western Europe after the

Brunelleschi's dome of the Duomo of Florence.

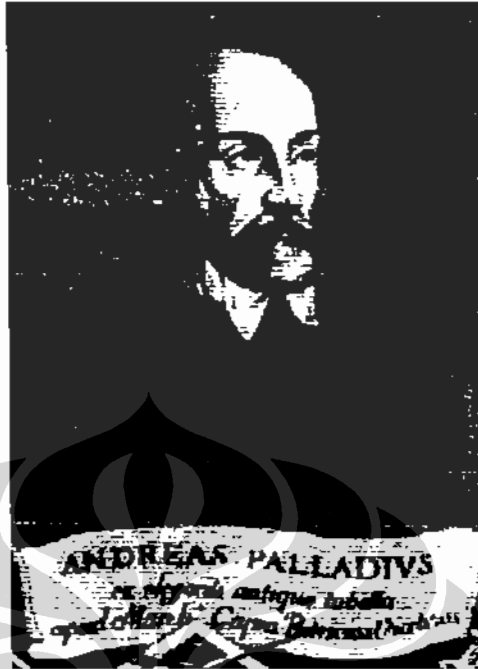
As the best preserved example of monumental Roman architecture, the Pantheon was enormously influential to European and American architecture. Numerous city halls,

universities and public libraries imitate this portico and dome structures. Examples of notable buildings influenced by the Pantheon are Thomas Jefferson's Rotunda at the University of Virginia, Low Library at Columbia University, New York, and the State Library of Victoria in Melbourne, Australia.

### *Palladian architecture*

Palladian architecture is a European style of architecture derived from the designs of the Italian architect Andrea Palladio (1508 – 1580). The term "Palladian" refers to buildings in a style inspired by Palladio's own works. What is recognized as Palladian architecture today is an evolution of Palladio's original concepts. This evolution of Palladianism as a style developed until the end of the 18th century. Palladianism became popular briefly in Britain during the mid-17th century, returned in the early 18th century and then spread to North America, most notably in the buildings designed by Thomas Jefferson. To understand Palladian architecture, one must first understand the architecture of Palladio himself.

Andrea di Pietro della Gondola, known to history as "Palladio", was born in 1508 in Padua, a mainland possession of the island-based Republic of Venice. Andrea's presumably settled life was transformed in 1537, when he was 30



years old. At that time he was engaged by Gian Giorgio Trissino, one of the period's leading scholars, to assist in executing new additions which Trissino had designed for his own villa at Cricoli outside Vicenza. This experience has affected Andrea in at least three ways. First, Trissino immediately became the role of Andrea's mentor and introduced him to the principles of classical architecture and the other disciplines of Renaissance education. Second, Trissino introduced his protégé to an ever widening circle of patrons, first in Vicenza, then Padua and finally in Venice itself. Third, Trissino bestowed upon Andrea the name by which he was to become famous: PALLADIO, taken from the Pallas Athens, the

Greek goddess of wisdom.

Through books, Palladio learnt the principles of Vitruvius, the classical Roman architect whose treatise had been rediscovered in the prior century, and of the Renaissance commentator, Leon Battista Alberti. He also became acquainted with the ideas and works of pioneering architects of his own period including Giulio Romano, Giovanni Maria Falconetto, Sebastiano Serlio and Michele Sanmicheli. Under Trissino's sponsorship, he received further introduction to classical Roman works and to early Renaissance works. Later in 1538, Palladio and his workshop had begun the construction of Villa Godi, the first of a series of country villas and urban palaces designed by Palladio in the following years for patrons among the provincial nobility of Vicenza. Until around 1560, his Venetian works culminated in three magnificent churches which remain today: San Giorgio Maggiore, il Redentore and "Le Zitelle" (S. M. della Presentazione).

Palladio always designed his villas with reference to their setting. If on a hill, such as Villa Capra, all facades were designed to be of equal value, in order for the occupants to have fine views in all directions; porticos on all sides were for the owners to fully appreciate the countryside while protected from the blazing sun, and were used rather in the way of the American porch today. Palladio

sometimes used a loggia as an alternative to the portico. Occasionally a loggia would be placed at second floor level over the top of a loggia below, creating what was known as a double loggia. Loggias were sometimes given significance in a facade by being surmounted by a pediment.

Palladio would often model his villa elevations on *Roman temple* facades. The temple influence, often in a *cruciform* design, later became a *trademark* of his work. Palladian villas are usually on just three floors: a rusticated *basement* or ground floor, containing the service and minor rooms; above this, the *piano nobile* accessed through a portico reached by flight of external steps, containing the principal reception and bedrooms; and above this, a low *mezzanine* floor with secondary bedrooms and accommodation.

In 1570 Palladio published his masterwork book in Venice, *I Quattro Libri dell' Architettura* (The Four Books of Architecture) that ensured his prominent place in architectural history, inspiring the architects across all Europe. The book set out his architectural principles as well as practical advice for builders, the most critical, perhaps, was the set of meticulous woodcut illustrations drawn from his own works to illustrate the text. The work was subsequently translated into every European language and remains in

print today both in paperback and hardcover. During the 17<sup>th</sup> century, many architects who were studying in Italy learnt of Palladio's work. Foreign architects then returned home and adapted Palladio's style to suit various climates, topographies and personal tastes of their clients. Isolated forms of Palladianism throughout the world were brought about in this way. However, the Palladian style reached the zenith of its popularity in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, primarily in England, Ireland and later North America.

#### People and Lifestyle

Colorful, rich, bold, romantic; Italy is all these and more. Historically rich, Italy is a cornerstone of today's western culture. Agriculturally rich, the Italian countryside is a prolific producer of fruit, vegetables, and livestock. Culturally rich, Italy has produced the world's best in art, architecture, music and literature. Yet, Italy's greatest wealth is its people: the gregarious, charming Italians that seem to know how to do everything bigger and better. They love their food, their families, their music and their heritage.

Many countries and people have occupied Italy over the centuries. Italians resented each of these conquerors. However, they intermarried with them and accepted a number of their customs. The traditional Mediterranean culture has had its influence on the central and *southern parts of the country where most*

*Italians are shorter with olive skin and dark hair. Farther north, the people are taller, blond and have lighter eyes, due to the Germanic influence across the Alps. But tall or short, light or dark, all Italians are gifted with the same collective outlook on life. They enjoy it. They are lively, sociable and have a passion for everything they do. They express emotions more freely and are not afraid to display affection. They welcome strangers into their towns and homes, and are always ready to share meals or stories, good jokes and even songs.*

Italians have assimilated a number of people within their culture. Albanians, French, Austrians, Greeks, Arabs, and now Africans have generally found a welcome in peaceful social interaction. This mixture is reflected in the wide variety of physical characteristics of the people—skin and hair colorings, size, and even temperaments. Italians also easily incorporate new foods and customs into the national mix.

#### *Food & Beverages*

Food is another beauty of Italy. Italian food is an extension of the rich, fertile fields and seashore that are such a part of the people. Italian cuisine is characterized by its flexibility, its range of ingredients and its many regional variations. It is an important element of the Italian lifestyle, and mainly reflects the rural culture and history of many people of

the country. Seafood, veal, chicken, fresh fruits and vegetables, and of course, pasta, is prepared with spices, sauces, and tender loving care. One more thing, Strong coffee is almost a must of each meal.

There are regional differences in what is eaten and how food is prepared. The first thing is that northern Italy is different in an enormous way from southern Italy in terms of culinary distinction. Typical meals for northern Italians are mostly be made up of local foods, while for southern Italy are most of spicy food in their pasta, fish, pork and lamb. Northern Italy is also very famous for good quality of wine. Marsala is the only southern Italian wine that most people know (and rather sadly used mostly for cooking). It is fortified wine from western Sicily. But this is all about to change. Since the 1990 local wine producers have been increasingly changed from high volume production to better quality wines. Valpolicella, Soave, Barolo and Barberesco are some of Italy's best known wines of which all come from northern Italy. The Veneto, covering the area from Venice to Lake Garda, is a significant wine producing region, not to mention VinItaly in Verona which is the country's largest wine fair. Prosecco, Bardolino, Valpolicella and Soave are all from this region, as well as the famous firewater known as Grappa.

### *Fashion*

Italy is largely associated with the world of fashion as it is being one of the largest garment producers in the world. Italian contribution to fashion as it is now known is abundant and authoritative. Giorgio Armani, Gucci, Dolce & Gabbana are only three of many famous people in fashion. The fashion industry continues to provide employment for millions of people and is one of the greatest factors for the upturn of the country's development.

### **Soccernomics - Impacts**

Football and Italy...are two inseparable parts. For most people in Italy, football is an obsession – one of Italian strongest passion, cutting through age, geographical and socio-economic groups. Sales of the Monday edition of Gazzetta dello Sport – the pink colored daily commenting on the matches disputed the day before – comes narrowly close to those of the top two national broadsheets. And Gazzetta is only one of three daily newspapers among the top ten by national distribution that devotes almost 70% of its pages to football.

Generally speaking, football is synonymous with business in Italy. Data for 2003 indicates that overall revenues generated by the sport stand at around Euro4.2bn, corresponding to those of the country's 13<sup>th</sup> largest industrial group. Two of the Italy's top football clubs (Lazio and Juventus) are also listed on the Milan stock market.

Revenues are derived from the sale of tickets, TV rights, sponsors and some merchandising. As is the case in other sectors of the economy, escalating wage costs frequently come up as an issue to address. Four of the 20 top-paid players in the World Cup play for Italian teams.

### *The 2006 World Cup*

The World Cup has a grand history, which partially mirrors the world's economy and society. For two months every four years, the world stops for the World Cup. It is estimated that 1.3 billion people watched the final of the 2002 World Cup in Japan, a number which increased in World Cup 2006 this year in Berlin, Germany. ABN AMRO economic research report edition March 2006 calculates that countries winning the World Cup add 0.7% to their economic growth.

People believe that soccer has a prominent impact on the economy and the effect at macro economic level and that on the financial markets are not so great that they can turn a recession into a boom, but they should NOT be underestimated. Past figures show, for instance, that economic growth among world champions tends to outstrip that in the losing finalist countries during a World Cup year. With a few exceptions, it is a case of winner takes all. A World Cup winner enjoys an average economic bonus of 0.7% additional growth, while the losing finalists suffer an average loss of 0.3% compared to the previous year.

A World Cup final 2006 between Germany and Italy is a top bill. The two teams have met once before in a final, in 1982 in Spain when Gli Azzuri won 3-1. Italy's victory in the World Cup final has made consumers and



producers more confident, which would translate into higher consumption and investment. That also helps Italy improve its image, which is good for exports. Moreover, the economic impulse would be much easier for the new government to take steps towards the necessary reforms.

Italy is the always be the symbol of culture, great flamboyance, beauty, enjoyment and passion as it is rich of diversity and emotional vibrancy. There is never enough page to explore every angle of the very unique part of the country. However, a step closer to know Italy better is at least has put its images closer to our heart. □

#### REFERENCES

- Belmonte, Thomas. *The Broken Fountain*, 1989.
- Buck, Joan Juliet. "Italian Spirit—A Generosity of Style." *Vogue* 171: 293–319, 1981.
- Chambers, M. et al. (1991) *The Western Experience Volume I To 1715*, Fifth Edition. McGraw-Hill, Inc. ISBN 0-07-010625-7
- Encyclopedia Britannica Online
- Galt, Anthony H. *Town & Country in Locorotondo*, 1992.
- Gentile, Emilio. "The Struggle for Modernity: Echoes of the Dreyfus Affair in Italian Political Culture, 1898–1912." *Journal of Contemporary History* 33(4): 497–511, 1998.
- Goldman Sachs Economic Research – *The World Cup and Economics 2006*; May 2006
- Hauser, Ernest. *Italy: A Cultural Guide*, 1981.
- Holmes, Douglas R. *Cultural Disenchantments Worker Peasantries in Northeast Italy*, 1989.
- Kertzer, David I. *The Family in Italy from Antiquity to the Present*, 1993.
- "The Lessons of History: Italy's Lack of Nationalism." *The Economist* 327(7817) pp. 14–16.
- Silverman, Sydel. *The Three Bells of Civilization: The Life of an Italian Hill Town*, 1975.
- "The Triumph of La Dolce Vita?" *New Scientist* 144 (1957-58): 73–74, 1971.
- Thompson, Doug. *State Control in Fascist Italy. Culture and Conformity, 1925–1943*, 1994.
- Spielvogel, J. (1991) *Western Civilization Volume I To 1715*. West Publishing Company. ISBN 0-314-82893-1
- Upshur, J. et al. (1991) *World History, Combined Edition*. West Publishing Company. ISBN 0-314-79265-1
- [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)
- [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)