

## ITALIAN QUAKE

# Future Bleak, Spirit Weak, Town Fights

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GEMONÀ DEL FRIULI, Italy—At 10 o'clock at night, the houses around here are empty and dark. But in a garage alongside the road a naked bulb glows wanly.

Inside the garage, 41-year-old Giacomo Rossi sits at a table with his family and a neighborhood couple. They are the only people left in the immediate area.

"Welcome," he says to a visitor; opening a bottle of a delightful local white wine and pouring a round.

"The first big earthquake in May, Il Terremoto, crushed many of our houses," Rossi said, explaining his surroundings. "The second one in September crushed most of the ones that were left standing.

"Worse, for many of us in Friuli, it crushed our spirit. The future looks black but, for the time being, we in this house are staying."

Less than a third of the inhabitants of this lovely town, almost leveled by the two earthquakes, remain. And no one sleeps under a roof any more.

Although the Rossis live in their garage, fearful that their two-story house may collapse, the family—Rossi, his wife, Marianna, 35, their 10-year-old son Simonpietro, and 4-year-old daughter, Olivia, along with Mrs. Rossi's aged mother—all sleep in a tiny house trailer parked outside.

The trailer is one of hundreds loaned by dealers throughout northern Italy to provide shelters for the plucky people who have chosen to remain in Friuli.

"This winter will determine the future of our region," said Rossi, bundling up in his sweater against the chill and taking a sip of wine. "If the earth remains quiet, people will come back. Otherwise, Friuli will become an abandoned place. And that would be a national tragedy."

On May 6, a massive earthquake shook the Carnic Alps of northeastern Italy and shuddered down the Tagliamento Valley, the heartland of Friuli, killing nearly 1,000 people.

But the hardworking, sturdy Friulians returned to their communities and began the arduous process of clearing the rubble and rebuilding—despite the aftershocks that occurred almost daily.

In most earthquake zones, such as Los Angeles and San Francisco, major tremors are followed by a gradually diminishing series of aftershocks.

But in mid-September, over a period of three days, Friuli was rent by two major additional quakes. Many of the houses, churches and public buildings that had been still standing collapsed.

An exodus of terrified villagers began.

Now, most of the residents have been evacuated to seaside resort towns whose rooms have been requisitioned by the government. Some residents commute by day to the Friuli area to look after their fields and flocks.

Those who remain overnight stay in tents or in the trailers which have been hauled here. No masonry houses are trusted to remain standing in the face of additional shocks.

One of the more staggering effects

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# Italy Town Fights Back From Quake Ruin

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of the quakes is the loss of the churches, public buildings and historic centers of the small towns that gave the Friuli region its distinctive character.

In nearby Venzone, for instance, a team of restorers had erected scaffolding around the cathedral to repair the May damage. But the Sept. 15 quake collapsed the church walls, leaving only the twisted metal scaffolding standing.

The centuries-old stone walls of the town also tumbled down in September.

"Five hundred years of history," commented a boy named Cirillo. "All just lying there."

"This kind of loss is terribly depressing," said Giacomo Rossi. "So much of our cultural heritage has been destroyed. The main thing, though, is to get through the winter."

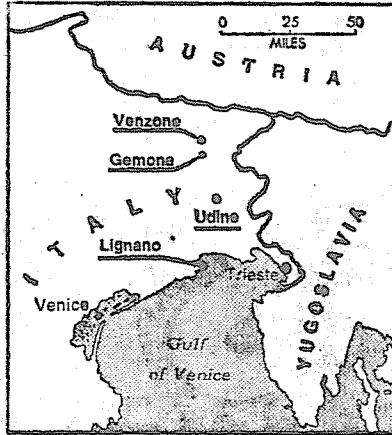
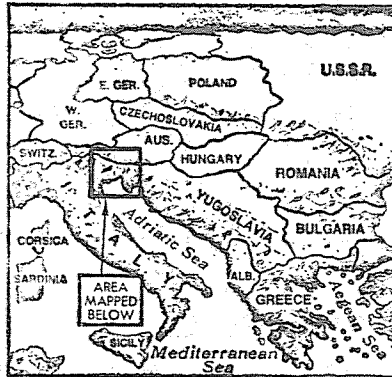
"I myself am looking after everyone's dairy cattle. We must tend our fields and animals. We must not let the chain of life be broken."

In Friuli, about 100,000 people have become homeless since the first quake, 40,000 of them in the September shocks. Some of those who fled have gone for good—others are undecided about returning.

In Lignano, a resort area on the Adriatic, 60-year-old Pietro Mardero said that he had worked for most of his life to buy land and build a home in Friuli.

"Coming here was the most painful trip in my life," he said. "The aftershocks never left us in peace and, as we found out in September, a new killer could come any time."

"We Friulians were always useful to others but now we are a weight on the nation and we do not like this feeling. I would like to go back, but I think I am too old."



The area hard hit by quakes. Times map

problems about where to locate the prefab camps.

"We are in what amounts to a wartime condition. Patience is necessary, and we hope that the prefabs will house the residents while the towns are being rebuilt."

The government's slowness in providing emergency housing has come under criticism here. The authorities in Rome have belatedly announced a special tax on all automobiles to raise money for Friuli relief.

In Udine, a handsome city with an elegant combination of Venetian, Renaissance and Austro-Hungarian architecture, many residents sleep in tents.

One such, Edda Cisilino-Novello, has pitched a tent for her family on a traffic island in the street in front of her damaged house.

"Even here in Udine, people are nervous," she said. "Everyone takes sleeping pills and tranquilizers. People have had mental breakdowns. When you look at the towns with the big damage, you realize what can happen to you if you sleep under a roof in a masonry building."

The people of Friuli are looking for assurance and guidance, but seismologists cannot say—or at least none in Italy is saying—whether the worst of the aftershocks are over, or whether there are more to come.

In the countryside, to which many have fled, other Friulians show stoicism, fortitude and courage.

"When my roof came down in May," said 51-year-old Santo Patat in Gemona, "I put it up again. It came down again in September, and I'm going to put it up again. I'll give up only when I'm swallowed up by the earth—me, my wife and my animals."

Oswaldo Bierti added: "I spent 27 years working to save money to buy my house. All that is left is the basement. I don't feel up to starting all over again."

Prefabricated houses are being built and many believe they are the key to solving the housing problem here.

"By next March, we hope to have 20,000 units constructed in 140 communities," said an aide to Special Commissioner Giuseppe Zamberletti in Udine. "We should have been building these faster but there were

