ITALIAN QUAKE

Future Bleak, Spirit Weak, Town Fights

BY WILLIAM TUOHY
Times Staff Writer

GEMONA 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, II 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 quakes, 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 19-year-old son Simoniestro, 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 numerous leaned 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 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.

Some 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...
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 quakes, 40,000 of them in 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 Marzaro 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 fuller could come any time."

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

Osvaldo Berti 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 problems about where to locate the prefabs 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 Cicilino-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."
One Year After Disaster, Italy Still Strives to House Homeless Families

BY SARI GILBERT
The Washington Post

TARCENTO, Italy—The front yard of the half-destroyed two-story stone building was cluttered with debris from last May’s earthquake, outdoor cookware on a smoldering fire, a bright blue tent and a small one-room trailer.

“It doesn’t look like much, but gradually our home is getting back to normal,” said a ruddy-faced woman whose casual attitude and mud-caked boots showed an acquired tolerance of the winter cold and rain.

Pausing briefly in her household chores, the woman, who said her name was Rosamarina, pointed proudly to the empty lot next door. There a squad of brown-uniformed Italian firemen were erecting the semi-prefabricated home she and her husband had been expecting for months.

“Better late than never,” she said philosophically, adding that the shelter offered by the new freight-car-shaped building would have been even more welcome before the onset of the harsh winter in Friuli province.

Some residents of this Italian region north of Venice criticize the timing of the emergency housing programs set up shortly after last May’s massive earthquake killed 1,000 persons and left near 1 million homeless.

Until recently the small town of Aprato boasted an angry homemade banner saying in the Friulian dialect, “Happy New Year to those who’ve helped us, may lightning strike the uncivilized who betrayed us.”

A local grocer, Ottavio Beltrame, flew an Austrian flag from his small store for months “because under Austrian rule (which lasted through World War I) the administrators were honest, while the Italian authorities did not live up to their promises to give us homes by September.”

Nevertheless, it is clear from a two-day drive through this area’s rolling foothills and sloping valleys that despite obstacles posed by a second major quake in September and more than 110 days of rain since July, the Italian government will keep its promise that there will be a roof over every Friulian’s head.

Rubble from the quakes, unpaved muddy roads, a lack of supplies and inadequate public transport show that much is yet to be done. But the countryside is colorfully dotted with more than 30 varieties of prefabricated buildings put up by regional and central government programs.

So far, more than 14,000 prefabs and mobile homes house some 45,000 persons. These largely temporary structures have replaced most of the 18,000 tents, 5,275 trailers and 2,000 obsolete railroad boxcars in which the homeless spent the winter.

In the marketplace of Tarcento, a city of 9,300 that until the earthquake was known as “the Pearl of the Friuli,” an unobtrusive mobile home contains the local “operational center,” where firemen, army personnel, government and regional representatives, police and carabinieri coordinate the emergency housing program.

One day recently Mario Penta, a Sicilian-born Interior Ministry official who came to Friuli eight months ago on the staff of a government-appointed special commission, had his hands full.

A long-awaited shipment of prefabs was several lodgings short, a group of tent-dwellers camped out on the local soccer field continued to bulk at moving into the prefabs assigned them, a middle-aged woman was distressed that her prefab was part of a cluster several miles from her damaged home, and the town drunk was discovered to be without an official residence certificate and therefore ineligible for housing.

“It’s a complicated business,” Penta said, “but gradually things are falling into place.” Although only 139 of the town’s 1,757 prefabs had arrived so far, major deliveries by both the central government and the region were expected shortly.

Penta and his counterparts in other Friulian villages said delays in the operation reflect the time needed to install facilities to service the prefabs, local production problems and political difficulties encountered by local authorities in expediting land for the new housing.

“But the major cause of the delay,” carabinieri Sgt. Giuseppe Rinfretti said, “was the second quake in September. It not only flattened many buildings that had remained standing but caused a widespread collapse of a psychological nature.

“People had spent the entire summer working to repair the spring damage and when the second quake undid much of what they’d accomplished many of them just felt like giving up. People are still afraid,” because of 500 tremors since September, he said, adding: “Many are reluctant to hand in their tents because they think they may soon have to use them again.”

The September quake led to the central government’s emergency program to aid the regional effort and has brought about much of the progress.

During the summer, an initial regional housing program for 9,281 dwellings got bogged down in red tape and political uncertainty. Premier Giulio Andreotti then sent special commissioner Giuseppe Zambretti, who had been in the area earlier, back north with a $120 million budget and almost unlimited emergency powers. His main job was to build and install 12,900 more lodgings using 4,000 soldiers and 500 firemen.

Italy has also received disaster relief from more than 15 countries and various international organizations.

The biggest contribution by far came from the United States, which immediately after last May’s quake allocated $25 million in emergency assistance. It will be used for the construction of five old-age homes and 12 schools.

The U.S. buildings, designed by a staff of Italian and American architects and engineers to be fully earthquake-resistant, have attracted extra attention because they will be the first new permanent structures in the area.
HELP FOR FRIULI AREA KEYED TO PLANNING

Italy Seeking to Learn From Past Quake Mistakes

BY LOUIS B. FLEMING
Times Staff Writer

PRADELIS, Italy—Two years after the Friuli earthquake, Giulia Parchioli and her neighbors are back in Pradelis, but not in their homes, and they are bitter. They live in temporary barracks, in sight of the shattered remains of their homes.

The other day Signora Parchioli was carrying a load of laundry 100 yards from the barracks to a shed that is the temporary washing place.

"We have come back to nothing," an old man said, watching her. His eyes moved to the lush Alpine meadows on the steep slopes behind the town and he added, "There are no cows now."

According to a government agriculture official, there will be no cows until the stables and barns are rebuilt.

There were 200 people in the town when the first quake hit the Friuli region of northern Italy in May, 1976. They moved into tents and started rebuilding. Then, the following September, everything they had rebuilt was shattered by a second quake, and they moved out again, homeless refugees. All 200 are back now. For how long, they have no idea.

But the bitterness of the homeless holds a reality: in fact, much has been accomplished.

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ground of Belice, the Sicilian town destroyed by an earthquake in January of 1968, which is still the center of scandal and bureaucratic inaction.

"The second earthquake taught us that we could not rebuild with our hearts," a senior government official said. "We needed technology.

The old towns were being rebuilt as they had been when the second quake struck them again. In the first quake 193 died. In the second, 12. But if the towns had been rebuilt in the old way, countless more would have rushed death. Now safety, safety standards are being imposed in old..."

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ITALY LEARNS FROM PAST

"We will have completed 500 new permanent classrooms in October," Emanuele Chiavola, regional secretary general for the reconstruction work, said at his headquarters in Udine.

Then will come the most difficult job of all—replacing the 50,000 damaged or destroyed dwelling units.

"With a few hundred builders we could very easily have leveled the ground and then built new houses," Chiavola said. "But we decided that all houses, even those very badly damaged, should be rebuilt if at all possible, even at a high cost. We want to keep the ambience, the culture, the history. We want to have as few traces of the earthquake as possible."

Already 15,000 dwellings have been repaired.

"Come and see for yourself," a home owner in Santa Maria Nova said.

His home looks much as it did when built in the year 1650. But behind the plaster, reinforced concrete forms a hidden web of new seismic strength. In Gemona, swallows wheel above silent streets, barbed wire closes off the plaza, the old experiment has been exposed by crumbling walls, and all is pretty much as it was two years ago. Yet in the valley below, new factories provide work for those who were able to stay or who have come back to the temporary homes that line the highways and fill the fields.

Of the 60,000 damaged houses, half are critically damaged, including about 12,000 which cannot be rebuilt. Studies indicate that we can rebuild in most locations," Chiavola said. "The problem is not seismic but geological. In a few locations, such as..."

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U.S. assistance totals $50 million, most of it for schools, homes for the aged. It is administered by a branch office of the Agency for International Development in Udine, run by an engineer, Morton V. Kolin, who thinks some efficiency records have been set by cutting out many of the bureaucratic controls that usually characterize such programs.

Ground was broken for the first building in July of last year, 10 months after the second quake. The first school, a 14-classroom elementary school in Marano, will open in October, scarcely two years after the second quake.

"The first bids we opened were 50% lower than the lowest bids, and we have the best workmanship in the job. The next bids were 30% lower and we have stayed by that way."

The United States is building a 100-bed hospital for the aged in Marano, and another will be ready for occupancy early next year in San Daniele.

All the schools and homes for the aged financed by the first $20 million U.S. program date from the construction, and a second $25 million program is under design contract. Of the $30 million, about $1 million was spent on emergency relief, $25 million will be spent on the centers for the aged and the balance for 14 schools with a total of 244 classrooms.

The Los Angeles Times


ITALIAN EARTHQUAKE AID

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The earthquake town, an influence on Friuli

—It discouraged planning because, as one government official put it, "to most people, plans meant papers, not action."

—It also "destroyed international confidence in Italian administration," the official said.

So most outside donors of help, the government of the United States included, have bypassed the government of Italy and carried its gifts straight to the provinces and the towns.

There has been only one serious scandal, which led to the conviction and imprisonment of a mayor and the secretary of the national government's chief representative for diverting funds to personal use.

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