

within the framework of institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank—those very institutions whose failures are exposed by the motion itself. “The date that all historians of world economic history indicate as the beginning of modern globalization, the era we live in, is precisely the era which signifies the end of the Bretton Woods agreements, and of dollar convertibility to gold.” Therefore, “the heart of this motion, which I know well—and I know its source, American leftwing Democratic circles—is exactly this: Either we organize an international conference reproducing those rules, requested . . . by the great legal experts who founded the United Nations after the League of Nations, by reforming international law and moving things ahead, or we have achieved nothing!” Gianni then announced he would withdraw his support if the text were altered in line with the government suggestions. Gianni’s forceful intervention aborted the government’s efforts to undermine the resolution.

Government Retreats

As subsequent debate showed, many colleagues from the opposition, as well as from the government coalition were ready to follow Gianni’s example, which isolated the government, and set it up for a possible defeat. This was avoided by a “preemptive withdrawal” announced by Undersecretary Ventucci. The government, Ventucci said, does not believe that international political conditions will allow “the organization, in the immediate future, of an ad hoc international conference of the kind presented by the authors of the motion; the government, however, has no objection to an action which

intends to undertake the necessary initiatives to achieve, as soon as possible, with other nations, the convocation of an international conference at the level of heads of State and Government.”

At that point, Ventucci proposed to reintroduce the five lines, minus the words “similar to the one held in Bretton Woods in 1944.” Next, according to usual procedures, a spokesman for each Parliamentary faction delivered a “vote declaration,” that is, a short speech motivating their “yes” or “no” to the motion. All speakers, with one exception, congratulated the government for having changed its mind, and for supporting the final text of the motion. Notably, Rep. Marco Zacchera, a foreign policy spokesman for Alleanza Nazionale (AN), a government party, welcomed the government opinion and the bipartisan consensus reached. “We have honored the Pope today,” Zacchera said. “How often did the Pope say that government leaders of the world must meet and discuss these issues!” Furthermore, Italy has ambitions to get a permanent or semi-permanent seat at the United Nations, which means “it must intervene on these aspects, taking positions.”

The Debate

A colleague of Zacchera’s, Sandro Delmastro delle Vedove, drew open applause from both his camp and the opposition, when he reminded people that, due to the “usurocratic” regime of the International Monetary Fund, the Argentinian bankruptcy is threatening a “war among the poor,” i.e., the Argentinian people and Italian families who lost their saving accounts. Usually he disagrees with Gianni, Delmastro said,

The Political Context for The Parliamentary Debate

The vote on April 6, of the Italian Chamber of Deputies on the motion for a reform of the international monetary and financial system, took place in the midst of an extraordinary historical circumstance in Rome. In what has been described as the greatest event in the history of Christian Rome, millions of pilgrims from all over the world were pouring into the Italian capital to render homage to the just deceased Pope John Paul II, in a grand demonstration of love for an extraordinary world leader. While Italian legislators were referring to the teaching of the Pope in the Parliamentary debate, four million people had already reached Rome, and millions more were expected in the subsequent days leading up to the funeral on Friday, April 8. A kilometers-long queue of an estimated one million people was slowly moving towards the Basilica of Saint Peter, where the body of “Karol the Great” was on view.

At the same time, Rome’s three airports were receiving non-stop more than 200 foreign government and state delegations, which were forming the largest gathering of world leaders ever seen in history. For the first time, an acting U.S. President rendered homage to a deceased head of the Roman Catholic Church. “George W. Bush is praying in front of the body of the Pope who fiercely opposed his preventive war,” commented the Italian First Channel television news.

A second circumstance of national relevance, whose implications affected the proceedings of the Parliamentary debate, was the severe defeat suffered by Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi’s party, Forza Italia, in regional elections April 3-4. Forza Italia’s defeat determined the loss of six out of eight regional governments by the ruling conservative coalition. In a total of 13 regions where Italians went to the polls, the conservative “House of Freedoms” got two and the opposition “Olive tree” coalition won 11 governments. Nationwide, about 6% of the vote shifted, foreshadowing a probable victory of the opposition in the general elections next year. —*Claudio Celani*