

Amelia Robinson Again Tours Italy

by Liliana Gorini

As Europe and the world say a clear “no” to the U.S. war against Iraq, which goes against the U.S. Constitution and international law, President Bush will have to back down. This was the message brought to Italy by Amelia Boynton Robinson, heroine of the American Civil Rights movement, close collaborator of Martin Luther King, Jr. in the fight for African-American voting rights in Alabama, and currently, vice-chairman of the Schiller Institute, and close collaborator of American Democratic Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.

This was Mrs. Robinson’s third visit to Italy in one year, made possible by a number of important official invitations, including by the City Council of Tramutola, a small city in southern Italy, and Cuneo, in the north. In the course of this visit, she addressed several public meetings—in Tramutola, Rome, Florence, San Marino, and Cuneo—and in all of them she was received and honored for her life-long battle in defense of civil rights and for non-violence. Most notable was a reception in Rome by Mayor Walter Veltroni at the Campidoglio, Rome’s Capitol Hill, where she was honored for her lifetime of struggle for civil and human rights. She gave interviews to all the major Italian media, including national television (Rai 3), Radio Popolare, Radio 24, Vatican Radio, and a number of magazines.

The trip was organized by the Italian Movimento Solidarietà (Solidarity Movement, LaRouche’s movement in Italy), whose president is Paolo Raimondi and vice president is Liliana Gorini.

The tour started on March 8, Women’s Day, in Tramutola, in the province of Potenza, in southern Italy, which had chosen to celebrate the role of women in politics, choosing the example of “this woman and her history,” as the official poster bearing Mrs. Robinson’s picture declared. Mrs. Robinson was flanked on the podium by the Mayor of Tramutola, Franco Simone; the president of the Region Basilicata, Filippo Bubbico; Raimondi; and three women involved in politics: Giovanna Lerosi, a judge from Salerno in charge of the fight against the mafia; a local mayor; and Livia Malcangio, who helped organize a humanitarian flight to Iraq last December, and works with the Gorbachov Foundation.

After describing her battles in defense of civil rights, justice, and peace, and her work with Martin Luther King, Mrs. Robinson addressed a very important issue for Italy: the slave mentality which she fought all her life. This mentality prevented many African-Americans from fighting for their rights, because they believed they “owed” something to their

masters. Many countries, including Italy, think they “owe” America something because of the help it gave for reconstruction after the Second World War, she said. But this does not mean that they should support injustice. Because the best way to support America, is not to support this war, as the Italian government of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi decided to do, but to support the true America in opposing it, which includes Amelia Robinson, LaRouche, and the LaRouche Youth movement.

This was also the message of Raimondi: “It’s important for us in Italy to know that there is a movement, in the United States, which has an alternative to this war, an alternative which is economic development and a new economic and financial system, and we call on Italian institutions to support it.”

Reception in Rome

In Rome, the city in which 3 million people marched for peace on Feb. 15, Mrs. Robinson was received by Mayor Veltroni at the Campidoglio, where she was awarded an official medal in commemoration of her trip. The Mayor emphasized the importance of her fight for peace, and said that Martin Luther King is still a reference point for those who fight for civil rights and peace today. He assured her that the fight for peace and justice will be continued, in Italy, by all people of good will, and that more demonstrations for peace, economic development, especially for Africa, and a dialogue of civilizations will be forthcoming.

Mrs. Robinson was later interviewed by Vatican Radio, where she had the opportunity to comment on the important role played by Pope John Paul II in the attempt to prevent a war. The next day she addressed a public meeting in the Adventist Church, the most important Baptist Church in Rome, which was overcrowded with 100 people. The whole conference was aired on a national radio network owned by the church.

In Florence, on March 15, Mrs. Robinson addressed two youth meetings of the Buddhist Center Soka Gakkai, on the occasion of an exhibition on “three men of peace”—Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and the center’s Buddhist leader. Each meeting was attended by 200 young people. She was honored with poems and choral singing. After hearing her speak, the 19-year-old choral director decided to come to the LaRouche movement’s international conference taking place that weekend, in Bad Schwalbach, Germany.

The next day she was again in Ravenna, guest of the Villaggio del Fanciullo, a center for young people in trouble, managed by Father Ulisse Frascali. She was interviewed by the weekly magazine *Qui*, which produced a two-page article.

In the nearby City State of San Marino, Mrs. Robinson spoke at a public conference organized by the local trade unions. The unions in San Marino, as in Italy, are very active in organizing demonstrations and strikes against Bush’s imperial war. The meeting was attended by 150 people, and the

news of it came during prime time on San Marino TV that night. It was organized by sending a leaflet with Mrs. Robinson’s biography to all 12,000 families living there. Some months ago, she had been officially received in the government palace of San Marino by the two Capitani Reggenti (government leaders), who a few weeks later, also officially received Lyndon LaRouche, and mentioned him and his proposals for a new economic and financial system in their traditional year-end message.

The trip ended in northern Italy, with an official invitation of the City Council of Cuneo (near Turin), and a visit to Milan. In Cuneo Mrs. Robinson was received by the Vice County Commissioner and two local ministers, who welcomed her to the city by emphasizing how important to them, personally, was King’s “I have a dream” speech and his heritage of non-violence. They thanked her for her role in trying to bring some reason to the American Administration.

She was then escorted to City Hall, where she first addressed briefly the City administration, led by the Mayor, and gave a short interview to a local television; and then addressed the meeting of the City Council, which included all city councilmen, both majority (the left parties, opposing the war) and the opposition (the parties belonging to the government of Prime Minister Berlusconi). As in previous public addresses, she gave a strong message, also addressed to Berlusconi, whose wishy-washy attitude helped make this war possible: “Today it is Iraq, tomorrow it is going to be Iran, Syria, North Korea; but who tells you that, after hitting weak countries, if he is not stopped, Bush is not going to hit also France, Germany, and your own country?” At this point, a city councilman of Berlusconi’s party started grumbling (his name, we were told, is Nello, but his nickname is “Nullo,” which means zero, and justly so), and another walked out of the meeting in protest. All the others applauded Mrs. Robinson, who called on them to act to stop this war “within the confines of the Constitution and of non-violence, as the majority of the U.S. population is trying to do.”

On March 19, just hours before the war started, Mrs. Robinson had her last meeting, in Milan, with Regional Councilman Raimondi, who received her officially in the name of the president of the Lombardy Region, Roberto Formigoni. As she was being ushered up to the Regional Council, the false news of the possible assassination of Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz had just come in from news agencies. This was received with great anxiety, because Aziz is close to President Formigoni, who travelled to Iraq many times in an attempt to mediate the end of the embargo, and was the first to meet Aziz when he came to Rome to be received by the Pope. “He is the moderate one in the regime, a Catholic, and if they killed him, God only knows what is going to happen next,” was one comment. Before leaving Italy, Mrs. Robinson met two representatives of Emergency, who organize humanitarian aid for the victims of the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, and gave an interview to Radio Popolare.