

Civil Rights Heroine Inspires Milan Youth

by Andrew Spannaus

Civil rights leader and Schiller Institute Vice-Chairman Amelia Boynton Robinson visited Milan, Italy from May 23 to May 25, spreading joy and courage among those she met, and urging political leaders and activists to fight for the general welfare of peoples and nations throughout the world.

Mrs. Robinson, who became famous for her role in launching the battle for African-Americans' right to vote in Selma, Alabama beginning in the 1930s, spoke at an event organized by the Civil Rights Movement-Solidarity (the LaRouche movement in Italy) and was also received at the Milan City Hall by officials of the mayor's cabinet. Her visit was well-covered by Milan's press, with a long interview in the Catholic daily *Avvenire*, and radio and television segments which covered her speaking at the Solidarity Movement conference on May 24.

The message which Mrs. Robinson brought to Milan resonated with the political situation in Italy, and the increasing rate at which the nation is feeling the effects of the current international economic and financial crisis. This, for two intersecting reasons. First, that Italy is a nation with a strong and varied tradition of political activism; second, the nation

has just come out of general elections, and a new government is now being formed, which is already at the center of a fight over the direction of economic and social policy. Thus, the way Amelia Robinson places the fight for economic justice carried by the LaRouche movement squarely in the tradition of the great civil rights battles of Martin Luther King, Jr., cuts through the confusion of populist slogans of the recent election campaign, and brings back into focus the objective of any serious political battle—the improvement of living conditions, and the fulfillment of the true civil rights of all human beings.

'Outsider' at 'Insider' University

This theme was central to the conference held at the very prestigious Catholic University of Milan, the institution at which the majority of the nation's post-war political leaders were educated. Over 130 people from all walks of life attended the event organized by the University Solidarity Movement (MSU), including college and high school students, businessmen, journalists, politicians, and priests.

In opening the conference, Solidarity Movement Secretary Claudio Ciccanti emphasized a key point about Amelia Robinson and the role she played in a movement which changed history. We must remember, he said, that she is an "outsider." Amelia Robinson is a person who, from outside of the institutions, succeeded in forcing the institutions to change. From this, Ciccanti said, we must learn that fighting for the common good means not simply doing what's possible while "administering" power, but rather waging a political war—both inside and outside the institutions—to transform the society in which we live.



Civil rights heroine Amelia Boynton Robinson (second from left, and inset, right), on a European organizing tour for the Civil Rights Movement Solidarity, spoke at Milan's famous Catholic University, and answered question from students and TV reporters.

Mrs. Robinson told how she and her husband, Samuel Boynton, began to work in the 1930s to improve living conditions for the poor blacks who lived on plantations; to help them find a home and land, and to teach them how to register to vote. She went through the events which led to the explosion of the voting rights campaign in Selma in the mid-1960s, and the moment when she gave part of her house and office as the headquarters for the activity of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Mrs. Robinson's husband died from being beaten, and she herself was attacked and left for dead on the Edmund Pettus Bridge at the outset of the march from Selma into Alabama's capital of Montgomery on "Bloody Sunday" 1965—events indelibly recorded on film and photographs of that historic march for the right to vote.

To Move Institutions, Not Destroy Them

In conclusion, she told her primarily young listeners that they must have the courage to challenge injustice, to fight for their rights as defined by the Constitution, and to confront fear.

The audience was clearly moved, and many participants came to the speakers' rostrum to ask questions and thank Mrs. Robinson. Notable among the many interventions, was a barrage of questions about the situation in the United States today, and worries about the direction of the Bush Administration. In addition, there were several comments about the necessity of working "from the bottom" to change things, which came from Catholic professors trained in the concept of "subsidiarity," and from sympathizers of anti-globalization street gangs known as the "Seattle movement."

Mrs. Robinson responded by reminding people that the fight for civil rights, and the fight for economic justice today, is not based on the destruction of the current political system. In the United States in particular, the fight is to guarantee the rights and principles which are at the basis of the U.S. Constitution. Thus, she said, we are fighting to get the institutions to fulfill their responsibility, not to destroy them.

LaRouche in the Press

A very important effect of Amelia Robinson's trip to Italy was the unusual amount of press coverage of her Milan visit and message. Besides *Avvenire's* extensive interview, there were reports in at least four other newspapers, and segments on the regional news of TG3 (Italy's third TV network); Telem Lombardia; the Catholic Church-linked Telenova network; Milano 6 television; and the Radio Radicale station.

Some of these publications even dared to mention the fact that the famous civil rights heroine is now, and has been for years, a leader of the Solidarity movement and political collaborator of Lyndon LaRouche. This was a kind of breakthrough for the Italian Solidarity Movement; it is known in Italy and its initiatives are often mentioned in the press, but they are usually presented without mentioning the broader movement which is behind them, nor its leader, LaRouche.

Hoof and Mouth Plagues Britain's Elections

by Rosa Tennenbaum

Four weeks ago, Great Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair declared that the hoof and mouth epidemic (HMD) which has been ravaging Britain for three months, was over, and he fixed the election date on June 7. The government ignored the disease; if HMD was mentioned at all, it was happy news, spread by the Ministry for Agriculture, Food, and Fisheries (MAFF), about decreasing numbers of new outbreaks. Unfortunately, the epidemic did not listen to Blair, but resurfaced with several outbreaks in the famous Yorkshire Dales in mid-May, in the middle of the election campaign.

A new, second center of the epidemic developed mostly unnoticed by the public, until it finally occurred to someone that, according to the MAFF website, the number of animals slaughtered daily was hitting 83,000, three times as high as the alleged peak of the epidemic two months ago. When people started to raise questions, the MAFF stopped publishing new figures. Officials did not want the election campaign to be disturbed by discussions about anything in the real world such as poverty, the collapse of infrastructure and the health care system, or HMD. Suddenly, the MAFF discovered that it had to protect the "privacy of farmers," and invoked the Data Protection Act to hide the figures.

'Hideous Abuse of Power'

It seems to be indeed what the *Sunday Times* calls "the greatest political cover-up of modern times" and a "hideous abuse of power." While the MAFF is listing 3.1 million animals as being culled in this epidemic, newspapers such as the *Sunday Times* and *Sunday Telegraph* calculate that the number has already topped 6 million. In several articles, they accused the ministry of "cleaning up" the figures every day, making it impossible to estimate the true scale of the epidemic, and of bringing down the numbers of new cases by "not confirming those that would previously have been listed." Also, young animals, including lambs, piglets, and calves, are not being counted when massacred, which accounts for 1.5 million alone.

The cull has become "a mindless bloodbath, clearing vast swathes of the countryside of animals," wrote the May 20 *Sunday Times*. There are unbelievable scenes of cruelties being reported. Overstressed slaughterers, mainly soldiers, often shoot into herds with high-powered rifles from up to 60 feet, and farmers report that they have found animals still alive three days after the killing, when the cattle were burned.