

‘Cheney’s Resignation Would Be Appropriate’

The following interview was granted to EIR’s Liliana Gorini by Sen. Silvana Pisa on Feb. 12, in her office at the Italian Senate. Senator Pisa is a member of the Defense Committee in the Italian Senate, and belongs to the group Parliamentarians for Peace, which includes not only her party and that of Foreign Minister Massimo D’Alema (DS, Democratici di Sinistra, or Left Democrats), but also the



Green Party and Rifondazione Comunista, which asked to be consulted by Italian Premier Romano Prodi before he consents to the doubling of the U.S. military base in Vicenza. Silvana Pisa was also a member of the group of “Left Democratic Women,” who officially received Amelia Boynton Robinson, Vice Chairwoman of the Schiller Institute, at the Chamber of Deputies in November 2004. On that occasion Pisa said, “We are not anti-American; we love the true America of Amelia Robinson and civil rights.”

EIR: What can you tell U.S. readers about the background to the decision of the Prodi government to consent to the doubling of the U.S. base in Vicenza?

Pisa: This decision created a discussion inside the government coalition because the program of the Unione, the coalition which won the elections last year and formed this government, instead demanded a “renegotiation of the military bases.” Not only was there no reduction, but the doubling of the Vicenza air base would make the Dal Molin airport in Vicenza the largest U.S. base abroad. Italy has the largest number of U.S. bases in Europe. The previous government of Silvio Berlusconi already expanded the U.S. bases in Camp Derby, Sigonella, Naples, and Aviano.

We wonder: Does a sovereign state such as Italy have any interest in giving away so much of its national territory to foreign military activities over which it has no control, particularly now that the U.S. military bases serve to further a military and political strategy (unilateral and pre-emptive war) which has made the world more insecure, and which Italy should not support?



The U.S. Aviano Air Base at Vicenza, Italy. "Italy has the largest number of U.S. bases in Europe," Pisa said. But, she added, "We wonder: Does a sovereign state such as Italy have any interest in giving away so much of its national territory to foreign military activities over which it has no control?"

We wonder: Why did the Prodi government double the weapons component of the military budget, with respect to the amount provided by the previous Berlusconi government? (It was 11% under Berlusconi, and it is 22% under Prodi.) I believe Undersecretary Forcella was involved in this decision, since he is very sensitive to the armaments industry around Fincantieri.

On the question of the Vicenza base, Foreign Minister D'Alema did not agree. When people claimed that the doubling of the base would bring "700 new jobs" for the city, D'Alema responded by saying that "these 700 jobs can be absorbed by other productive activities." In making the decision, the citizens of Vicenza were bypassed.

It was the U.S. Ambassador to Rome [Ronald] Spogli, who exerted heavy pressure on the Italian government, claiming that the U.S. Congress was deciding about refinancing military missions in this same period, and that if Italy did not decide "immediately," it would lose the financing. This was phase one of the significant pressure brought to bear by Ambassador Spogli. Phase two was the letter from six ambassadors demanding that the Parliament approve the refinancing of the Italian military mission in Afghanistan, which expires at the end of February.

EIR: How do you view the proposal of Foreign Minister D'Alema for launching a peace conference on Afghanistan which includes a comprehensive peace plan for Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Middle East?

Pisa: That is our proposal. The Italian government had established a high profile in foreign policy, with the UNIFIL mission in Lebanon which acted in an exemplary manner, with its equidistance from Israel and Palestine. The issue of Afghanistan is still under debate because it is clear that the last five years of military deployment have not yielded the results they were supposed to yield. Nothing leads us to believe that

an increased military commitment in Afghanistan will solve the problem. To the contrary, the Taliban seem to be stronger now, in part thanks to the continuous bombing of civilians, and terrorism is increasing rather than decreasing, exactly as in Iraq.

I was visiting Kabul last Summer with the Senate Defense Committee, and we meet the Afghan Defense Committee, which asked us: "Why are you guys bombing our towns?" And we ask ourselves: If we confirm our military mission in Afghanistan, what is the strategy going to be? We certainly would not welcome the return of the Taliban to power, but the mission has to be redefined, as an international police mission rather than a military mission, focused on training their army. D'Alema's peace proposal, as it was launched in Riga, was endorsed by Chirac and initially also by Karzai, who then withdrew his support. I think it is the only strategy which can work.

EIR: In the U.S., there is a growing demand for Cheney's resignation, or impeachment, as a result of all the lies he fabricated to promote the Iraq War, and now to promote a war against Iran. How do you see this?

Pisa: President Nixon was forced to resign in the Watergate scandal for less than that. Besides, the war policy of Bush and Cheney was clearly defeated in the recent midterm elections, and it is illegitimate from the standpoint of international law. Thousands of Americans have died in Iraq, and the war has led to an increase in terrorism rather than a reduction. Bush and Cheney have to pay for this. I think Cheney's resignation would be very appropriate. I have to say that I am an admirer of America, which is able to have a public debate on these issues, including on the role played by Cheney and Halliburton's interests in promoting this war. I just wish that the U.S. media and major TV channels would be more active in this public debate.