

EIRFeature

Lawmakers Gather in Rome for Jubilee Year Debt Forgiveness

by Paolo Raimondi

Paolo Raimondi, president in Italy of the International Civil Rights-Solidarity Movement, participated as a guest in the Nov. 4-5 Jubilee conference in Rome.

On Nov. 4-5, some 5,000 Parliamentarians and government officials of 96 nations met in Rome with Pope John Paul II, at the critical point of his organizing the Jubilee of the Year 2000. The Biblical Jubilee designated a year dedicated to the cancellation of debts, and the general amnesty of slaves and prisoners. The Pope has focussed for several years on the goal, that the sovereign debt of Third World nations be forgiven and written off in this Jubilee Year.

The “Assembly of the Members of the Parliaments of the World,” held in the celebrated Paul VI Auditorium of the Vatican, affirmed that defense of human dignity, and the interests of the people and of the nations, come before those of globalization.

This historic event, which has taken place in the middle of the biggest economic, social, and moral crisis of humanity, explicitly was not intended to be considered as any type of world government in process, but as the gathering of the elected representatives of the peoples of all the nations. It saw the unanimous approval of three motions: on remission of the foreign debt of the poor and developing countries; on defense of the dignity and the freedom of the human person; and on initiatives on ethics and globalization (see our *Documentation* section).

Pope John Paul II, in his message, reminded all the participants that “politics is a mission and a vocation, called to the wellbeing of all and of each individual,” at the service of justice, solidarity, and peace in the governing of the public affairs and in the formulation of the laws, “a task that associates man with God.”

The conference was organized by the “Interparliamentarian Group for the Jubilee 2000” (IG), chaired by Italian Sen. Ombretta Fumagalli Carulli. Senator Fumagalli Carulli is Deputy Health Minister in the present Italian government and president of the Senate group of the Rinnovamento Italiano (RI) party, created by Italian



Pope John Paul II's years-long organizing for a "Jubilee Year 2000" international forgiveness of Third World debt, led in early November to an extraordinary gathering of 5,000 parliamentarians from 100 countries at the Vatican. The crucial organizing role in bringing these forces together, for a new economic order, was played by the Italian Senate's Inter-Parliamentary Group, headed by Sen. Ombretta Fumigalli Carulli (right). Significant groupings in the Italian Senate have been inspired not only by the Pope's Jubilee call, but also by the more far-reaching proposal for a new monetary system, the New Bretton Woods, of Lyndon LaRouche (above). Twenty-five Italian Senators had just introduced New Bretton Woods legislation to the Senate.

Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini. In her opening intervention, Senator Fumagalli Carulli related how the idea of the Assembly of the Parliamentarians of the World came into being.

Inspired by Pope John Paul II, Senator Fumagalli Carulli took the initiative, in July 1997, to create the first organizing body of Italian Parliamentarians, which involved more than 260 members of Parliament, from all parties. "We have set ourselves the task of opening a global discussion on at least three political and cultural lines and choices of civilization, with which to stimulate the passing of effective acts by all the Parliaments upon the Earth, as a courageous service to humanity in the third millennium," she said. "Three very topical themes require urgent answers—the solution to the issue of the foreign debt of the poor countries; religious freedom, still today limited or coerced in many parts of the planet, [and used as] a pretext of division and wars; and the dignity of man. . . . As a priority, we have looked at the parliaments of those countries with a strong Christian presence, or which are the cradles of one of the three monotheistic religions. This we have done in the name of our shared descent from Abraham, the father of the Faith in One God."

Foreign Debt, and LaRouche's New Bretton Woods

In the morning session on Nov. 4, the three motions were presented to the conference participants for discussion. The first one, "The Foreign Debt of Poor Countries," was read by Sen. Paolo Giaretta, very active IG organizer and vice

president of the Senate group of the Partito Popolare Italiano (PPI). On May 27, 1999, Senator Giaretta was the leader of a group of 56 Italian Senators who presented a motion in the Senate for a foreign debt moratorium for the nations of the developing sector.

The second motion, "Human Dignity and Freedom," was read by Sen. Alberto Monticone (PPI), IG vice president. The third one, "Ethics and Globalization," was read by the former Prime Minister, Sen. Giulio Andreotti, president of the Executive Welcome Committee.

While these were the only three official motions introduced on the floor of the conference, a number of other contributions had come previously from different parliamentarians of several countries to stimulate the discussion. The most significant one was presented by 25 Italian Senators, led by Sen. Riccardo Pedrizzi, who called for a New Bretton Woods monetary agreement as the only solution to the ongoing global financial crash. The motion, first presented on Oct. 19 in the Senate and the next day to the IG executive body, contains the same analysis and proposals long elaborated by Lyndon LaRouche. It calls upon the governments and parliaments of the world to recognize the dramatic urgency and act as President Franklin D. Roosevelt did in 1944 in convening the Bretton Woods conference, to begin the postwar reconstruction.

The "Pedrizzi motion" had already been given a very big boost promoting its discussion among parliamentarians. On Nov. 3, *Avvenire*, the official daily of the Italian Bishops



Five thousand Parliamentarians and Congressmen from nearly 100 countries fill the "Paul VI Auditorium" at the Vatican, for the opening session of the Jubilee conference.

Conference, printed an article with quotes from the Pedrizzi motion, announcing that it was to be discussed at the Vatican conference. The same day, a newly created, Catholic-oriented press agency in Rome, Edital, circulated the full text of the motion.

The debate which followed the introduction of the motions to the conference, consisted of short, precise, often emotional interventions by representatives from among each delegation present in the auditorium. All the parliamentarians from the countries of the so-called poor and developing sector spoke the same language: The debts and the unbearable debt service have destroyed their economies, have killed their youth, and will kill more tomorrow. They have repaid, already, more than they borrowed, but are left with even more to pay, repeated the representatives from Africa, Ibero-America, and Asia, from both Christian and Islamic countries. All stressed that debt relief is indispensable, but should be only the first step in defining a new economic system.

Brazilian Deputy Marcelo Barbieri, of the PMDB party in the ruling government coalition, stated, "We are here in Rome, because we believe that the presence of the Pope will give to this discussion an extraordinary echo. In the immediate future we will see the wave which is taking off from this day." Argentine delegate Mario Elpidio Méndez, from the Frepaso party, said, "For us Argentines, this is a very important forum: This is the first international occasion to speak about our most serious problem, the foreign debt which paralyzes our production." The Argentine delegation, from a nation whose economy is currently in an excruciating crisis of

unpayable debt, was 400 parliamentarians strong.

Ahbad Mosbah, Lebanese deputy of the Sunni Muslim religion: "The Pope calls for human dignity and civic solidarity among the people: For Lebanon, these values mean its survival." A senator from Nigeria welcomed and supported the initiative of Hon. Giovanni Bianchi, from the Italian PPI, who presented the law decree for an Italian remission of debts of the developing countries equivalent to \$6 billion, passed unanimously by the two Chambers of the Italian Parliament.

Senator Bianchi had invited Lyndon LaRouche, on Oct. 12, to testify before of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Deputies in Rome on the New Bretton Woods program as the way out of the global crash (see *EIR*, Oct. 27, 2000).

Francisco Patra, from the Philippines, addressed the problems and the sufferings provoked by the 1998 financial crisis caused by the speculators' assaults, and called for a new economic system, a "safety net" against the devastating effects of financial globalization. A representative from Peru precisely captured the motivations elicited by the conference with these words: "We will work more strongly and deeply in our countries to fully respond to the appeal of the Pope."

This commitment, hopefully, has shaken up also the hearts and the minds of the representatives of the so-called advanced sector, who, with exceptions, have been overwhelmed by the sometimes desperate call from the poor countries, and preferred to satisfy themselves with general pronouncements about human values and principles.

The debate was concluded later in the afternoon with the

approval of the three motions and with two very significant decisions. First, the participants agreed to take the motions back home and present them for discussion and vote in their national parliaments. Many demanded that some form of coordination be maintained after the end of the conference, to carry forward a unity of intentions and of actions, like the debt moratorium, and other crucial acts for the survival and future life of their nations and their peoples. Senator Fumagalli Carulli offered that the Italian Interparliamentary Group, which made possible the organizing of the conference, would take upon itself the full responsibility to carry forward the requested coordination.

Question of American Leadership

Senator Fumagalli Carulli indicated how widely the net of this international organizing process for the Jubilee has spread. It has led the Italian initiators to establish working contacts with 115 Parliaments and Congresses worldwide, seeking forgiveness and cancellation of developing nations' foreign debt. Some of them have been extremely active, and in particular those of Latin America. In Argentina, for example, a Commission for the Jubilee was established by both Chambers of the Parliament.

But one has to say that the behavior of the American political parties and institutions has been unmistakably offensive vis-à-vis the whole event, its organizers, and its participants. It is known that the U.S. parties' leaderships have strongly opposed the themes and the resolutions presented at the conference: in particular, the moratorium on the foreign debts of the developing sector (**Figure 1**). They have rejected completely, the call for a moratorium on the death penalty. This has created a very aversive atmosphere, also, for those American politicians who genuinely wanted to take part in the event.

On the death penalty issue, the pressure from the U.S.A. has been so unbearable that the IG felt compelled to take out the call for a halt to executions: In fact, the final version of the motion on human dignity does not contain any reference to the death penalty issue. Many observed with great preoccupation that the U.S.A., the so-called only superpower, has been completely absent from the Rome event.

Thus still greater is the importance of the role of Lyndon LaRouche in the weeks before the conference, in presenting his New Bretton Woods proposals to the Italian Senate's Foreign Affairs Committee; and the importance of the New Bretton Woods resolution of Senator Pedrizzi and 24 other Senators.

The Vatican conference sessions otherwise were characterized by a number of significant interventions. Senator Andreotti told the audience that "we felt the urgency to reaffirm that globalization must not be concerned with and aimed only at economic processes, but will have some validity only if it will help in the conquest and in the development of always higher cultural and spiritual levels." Cardinal Roger Etche-

garay, president of the Central Committee of the Great Jubilee for the Year 2000, underlined that, "in the political field, above all, freedom is the fruit of a moral and spiritual battle. Nothing is more blinding than the fascination of power and of the seduction of ones' own image in the mirror of public opinion."

Hon. Luciano Violante, president of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, spoke about the risks of globalization resulting from the excessive power the economy and the markets: "the uncritical and passive exaltation of the free market, the concept of the exchange as the measure of all things, a concept for which only what can be sold and bought has value, and vice versa, everything can be sold and bought. Human dignity, instead, must constitute for all, believers and non-believers, a limit to free trade." He then identified the main challenge for politics in the fight against poverty, new and old forms of slavery, and in the lack of sufficient water for the needs of all human beings.

In Imitation of St. Thomas More

An important recurring theme of the official interventions has been the decision, taken by Pope John Paul II on the 31st of October, to proclaim St. Thomas More as the Patron of Leaders and Politicians (see p. 25). On July 6, 1535, Thomas More was decapitated for his refusal to accept the decision of the English King Henry VIII to appoint himself as the head of the Church of England.

Among the reasons given for his decision, the Pope mentioned: "The need felt by the world of politics and public administration for credible role models able to indicate the path of truth, at a time in history when difficult challenges and crucial responsibilities are increasing." The Pope continued: "This was the height [his execution] to which he was led by his passion for the truth. What enlightened his conscience was the sense that man cannot be sundered from God, nor politics from morality."

When John Paul II gave his main address, concluding the Nov. 4 sessions of the conference (see p. 27), the room was packed with 10,000 people. The Holy Father was greeted by a group of children from each continent of the world; by short remarks of Senator Fumagalli Carulli, who delivered the three approved motions into his hands; by Sen. Francesco Cossiga, former Italian President, who supported the declaration of St. Thomas More as Patron of Leaders and Politicians. Also greeting John Paul II was former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachov, who, underlining the importance of the religions, warned that the world has moved from the communist fundamentalism to a liberalist fundamentalism. A courageous message was read by Sen. Nicola Mancino, president of the Italian Senate, who called for politics to prevent the strong danger of "social Darwinism," and to promote the debt cancellation and the banning in every country of the death penalty.

On Sunday, Nov. 5, the participants in the "Assembly of the Members of the Parliaments of the World," together with

all the ambassadors to Rome and to the Vatican State, attended the holy Mass celebrated by the Pope in St. Peter's Square. The conference concluded with an "Evening Celebration in Honor of his Holiness John Paul II" titled "On the Path of Isaiah." The invitation explained that "Isaiah, one of the Great Prophets, is the singer of hope, he who announces the advent of the Messiah to the people of Israel and shows the way to follow to unify populations and build a world of hope and brotherhood."

The evening event was also dedicated to St. Thomas More and to Giorgio LaPira, the well-known mayor of Florence, who died this day 23 years ago and is soon to be beatified. LaPira, a professor very much committed to the spiritual and political education of the youth in the years after World War II, was "man of dialogue, with his motto 'Knock down the walls, build bridges,' whether concerning Vietnam, Europe, the Middle East or de-colonization." One famous saying of LaPira, used by the IG organizers to inspire the participants, has been his declaration in relation to the Jubilee of the Year 1975 called by Pope Paul VI: "Our participation in the Holy Year, our conversion, is not a pious act, but a political fact, since it contributes to the fulfillment of God's plan for history."

After the message of greetings addressed to the Pope from a number of international personalities, including the Secre-

tary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, the evening celebration saw many musical offerings, whose high point was the "Ave Verum Corpus" of W.A. Mozart, performed by the Orchestra and Chorus of the Opera Theater of Rome, conducted by Maestro Nicola Samale. This celebration was broadcast on television worldwide. It was closed, appropriately, by the recitation of the moving and inspiring prayer written by American President Franklin Delano Roosevelt for the creation of the United Nations Organization, which his unfortunately sudden death prevented him from attending.

Motion: 'The Foreign Debt of Poor Countries'

The Parliamentarians taking part in the "Assembly of World Parliamentarians," on the occasion of the "Jubilee of Statesmen and Parliamentarians" on November 4th and 5th 2000, in Rome

Considering that

1. In spite of the progress made towards global economic development, there are extremely serious disequilibria at the planetary level and a considerable share of the world population continues to live in conditions of extreme poverty: almost half the world population has to live with less than two dollars a day and 1.2 million people have to live with less than a dollar a day. This is a situation that leads to the negation of the basic human right to food, health, housing, work, and education, and this represents an insult to our common humanity.

2. Although the development process involves new countries, the poor are witnessing an increase in the gap between them and the wealthy: the richest fifth of the world population had, 40 years ago, a wealth equal to thirty times that of the poorest fifth; nowadays the gap has increased by 74 times; the OECD countries, with 19% of the world population, control 71% of the global trade of commodities and services; 95% of world commercial credit goes to the richest 20% of the population, while the poorest 20% receives only 0.2% of credit.

3. In this context, the burden of foreign debt represents for the less developed countries an intolerable hindrance to social and economic development policies: many countries have to allocate a considerable share of their gross domestic product to payment of debt service. This amount is equal to four or five times what they can allocate to policies for health, education, access to drinking water, support to development. Furthermore, the debt must be paid in valuable currencies and the poorer countries suffer the additional damage of the increase in the price of raw materials and in the higher exchange rates with the national currencies, to the point that

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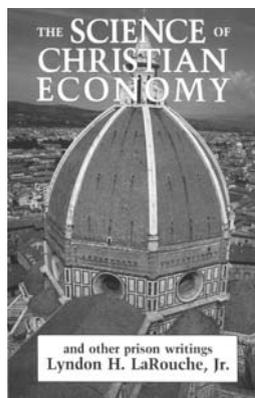
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