

Bonino Doesn't Mince Words

Giulia Madron (September 24, 2013)



On Sunday, September 22, 2013, Minister of Foreign Affairs Emma Bonino, who was in New York to participate at the United Nations General Assembly ministerial week, met the Italian community at the Italian Consulate General in New York. During this event, Minister Bonino touched upon several arguments: the fight against terrorists, the plan of making new investments in Italy, and also about the decision of closing the Consulate in Newark, illustrating to the Italian community the programs and goals of her Ministry.

The Italian Consul General Natalia Quintavalle introduced briefly the Italian-American community in New York to Minister Bonino, sharing a few words about the Italian Institutions and organizations that represent the "successful integration of the Italians in this country, while preserving the Italian heritage and culture," and that they are "the pillars of the Italian presence in New York."

Then, Ms. Quintavalle passed the ball to the permanent representative of Italy in the United States,



Ambassador Claudio Bisognero, who introduced Minister Bonino: "It is a great honor and privilege to present our Minister of Foreign Affairs Emma Bonino to the Italian-American community here in New York," said Amb. Bisognero. "Emma Bonino has a strong attachment to the United States and a very strong supporter of the Italian community abroad," said the Ambassador. "She specifically asked me and the Consulate General to organize this event tonight with you," he affirmed. "Actually your presence here is very important. I want to mention the great contribution that Italians gave for the development of this country, as well as the great contribution you give to the Italian system, that is the action that Italy is doing in the United States within every field: political, economical, commercial, cultural and also in the promotion of the Italian language," said the Ambassador.

Mr. Bisognero then introduced Minister Bonino, who was welcomed with a big applause. The Minister opened her speech describing to the Italian-American community the special affection and attachment she has with the United States and in particular with New York. In fact, Minister Bonino is not new to this country. She came here at the age of 16 with a scholarship, and with a special recommendation from her dad: "Do not take the subway."

After sharing this memory about her childhood, Italy's Minister of Foreign Affairs began her talk confronting immediately the shutdown of the Consulate in Newark. "I know I caused for many of you a great displeasure," said Ms. Bonino, "so I want to explain this decision to you." The Minister illustrated briefly the situation Italy is currently going through. "Since 2006, the number of diplomats in Italy has been reduced by 10% and the number of diplomatic officials by 20%. Italy has half of the diplomats of Germany, France, and England." Ms. Bonino underscored that Italy is going through a really hard time and that "we need to rationalize our resources and for this reason we were forced to make this decision," she affirmed. However, said Bonino, "I guarantee that the services for the people will not fail. We will strengthen the New York Consulate developing several strategies." Moreover, she continued: "We will have to ask you to be patient because there will be some inconveniences in order to offer services in other parts of the world, like China, which we do not cover now [?] and where there are many Italians like you."

Then Minister Bonino explained how important this week will be at the United Nations General Assembly. "The latest news about the 70 Christians killed in Pakistan, the massacre in Kenya, the situation in Sahal, makes us think there is a terrorist organization that might have changed its form, its initials, its location but certainly has not disappeared," affirms Ms. Bonino. "This week we will also talk about Libia: we can't allow such an instable nation to exist in front of us," concluded the Minister.

Shifting the argument from foreign policy, Bonino said that during the series of meetings at the United Nations, she also intends to talk about Italy's development and future projects. First, she mentioned the Expo of Milan 2015, saying that "for Italy, it is a great opportunity for an economic relaunch," and hoping the US will decide to participate. "I know the decision will be made the first of October, and I really want to thank the Italian community in the US that really helped us in reaching this goal," said Bonino. Second, Bonino talked about another important project called "Destinazione Italia (Destination Italy)," a project with the specific goal of making Italy become a more attractive country for both Italian and foreign investors. And this is possible by "simplifying the bureaucracy, operating on fiscal regimes, duration of action and procedures," said Bonino.

The Minister concluded her speech restating the commitments and the efforts which Italy's government is doing for the country, asking the Italian community in New York for all the support and the trust this administration needs. "We are at a very delicate moment," affirmed Ms. Bonino, "but we keep going forward with our program and our main purposes: to restore the economy and modernize the institutions." And, she continued, "I hope that your love for Italy will produce those essential synergies needed for the development of our country. I also hope you will help us to value our assets, and the best asset Italy has are the human resources."

A speech, the one made by Emma Bonino, which disseses the problems of a country going through a difficult situation also underscores the hopes of its citizens, like her, who believe in its rebirth.

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