Human Rights in Italian Foreign Policy. Ambassador Giulio Terzi di Sant'Agata at Montclair State University

Marina Melchionda (April 02, 2009)



On March 31, the Coccia Institute for the Italian Experience in America invited the Italian Ambassador to the United Nations Giulio Terzi di Sant' Agata to Montclair State University where he gave a Special Lecture., "Responsibility to Protect – Toward a more compassionate international action: Italy's past, present and future role"

The auditorium was crowded. There was a continuous whisper, a soft hush of excitement. They were all there to attend the Lectio Magistralis that the Italian Ambassador to the United Nations Giulio Terzi di Sant' Agata was scheduled to deliver.

The students were not the only ones interested. The lecture, organized and promoted by the Coccia Institute for the Italian Experience in America, was held in the LeBoffe Lecture Hall at Montclair State University in New Jersey and welcomed many respected Italian and American officials.

The Consul General of Italy in New York, Francesco Maria Talò, and the Consul in Newark, Andrea Barbaria, were in attendance. Cav. Joseph Coccia and his wife Elda sat in the second row of the spacious auditorium while waiting for the lecture to begin.

The institute's Director Dr. Mary Ann Re, and Willard P. Gingerich, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Montclair State University, welcomed Terzi di Sant' Agata at 3:00 p.m. The lecture, "Responsibility to Protect – Toward a more compassionate international action: Italy's past, present and future role," was the first he had ever given in the United States.

He had a singular and precise message to convey: Italy's foreign policy is strictly guided by the ideal – or rather, the value – to protect and enforce the respect of human rights throughout the world. "Italy is primarily viewed as the country of Machiavelli, who believed that political affairs must be looked at from an "amoral" point of view. This is not correct with regard to foreign policy. On this topic, Cesare Beccaria's work Dei delitti e delle pene teaches the Italian government the greatest lesson: every commitment abroad must be driven by only one aim and purpose: the diffusion and protection of civil, social, and political human rights.

The ambassador demonstrated this point through a long and exhaustive round up of Italy's key military interventions during the last 15 years or so, analyzing the decisions behind the dispatch of the country's troops to war zones. Discrimination, persecution, and the repression of civil and social rights such as the freedom of speech and of religion are all considered to be sufficient and important reasons to intervene. From this, the decision was made to support the U.N.'s military efforts in the Middle East, as well as maintain a presence in Lebanon in 2006 and in Iraq and Afghanistan today.

In the past, continued the speaker, Italy has also played an outstanding role in the U.N. toward the abolition of the death penalty and the institution of the International War Crimes Tribunal.

Finally, the ambassador reflected on the relationship between Italy and the United States, "a transatlantic bond that is growing stronger with the new president's foreign policy, which is based on two pillars: the defense of human rights and the support of continuous dialogue."

The Lectio Magistralis lasted for about 40 minutes; the profound silence in the auditorium demonstrated the audience's intense interest in the subject.

After a brief Q&A session, those present were invited to join Ambassador Terzi di Sant' Agata, Consuls Talò and Barbaria, and the Coccia family at a reception on the seventh floor of Montclair State's University Hall, where the wall of windows allowed guests to enjoy a beautiful view of the campus.

There they sampled a Mediterranean buffet of typical Italian foods, from cold cuts and pickled peppers, to olive and nut breads and small pastries, along with Middle Eastern dishes such as hummus, pita bread, and baba ganoush.

The ambassador was given several "souvenirs" of Montclair State University by Willard P. Gingerich, and had the chance to speak with students who were interested in the lecture and stayed until the very end.

i-Italy was given the opportunity to exchange a few words with the ambassador, as well. When we asked him what he wanted to communicate to the American students present at his lecture, he answered: "I want new generations to understand that Italy's purpose in foreign policy is to safeguard international security through the wide and extensive protection of human rights. Today, Italy has a global responsibility. Historically, our country dominated the Mediterranean, but it is now time to reestablish the area's influence and, thanks to the privileged relationship we have with the United States, support our neighbors in their struggle for human rights."
(Edited by Giulia Prestia)

Find more photos like this on i-Italy [2]
******

The following people have contributed to the organization and the succeed of this event:

Provost and Academic Vice President, Dr. Willard P. Gingerich

Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Dr. Claire Taub

Cav. Joseph Coccia, Jr.; Elda Coccia; Elisa Coccia; Genevieve Nicastro

Rudy Valli, Chair of the Coccia Institute's Board of Advisors

Senator Anthony Bucco, NJ State Legislature--NJ Italian American Legislative Caucus

Jacky Grindrod: District Director for Congressman Bill Pascrell

Commissioners of the NJ Italian & Italian American Heritage Commission:

Cav. Gilda Rorro Baldassari

Dr. Nancy Carnevale

Carmelo Corallo

Catherine Vignale (also President of ITANJ)

Mario Marano

Tom Pecora, President-Italian American Heritage Foundation

Joseph Agresti, Immediate Past National President UNICO

Frank Tidona, Past President UNICO

Sam Fumosa, Past President NJ OSIA

Commendatore Peter Caruso

Cav. Angelo Bianchi

Dr. Anthony Tamburri, Dean of the Calandra Institute/CUNY

Dr. Gabriella Romani--Director Alberto Italian Studies Institute at Seton Hall University

Dr. Elizabeth Defeis--Seton Hall Law School

Dr. Andrea Baldi--Rutgers University

Related Links: http://www.chss.montclair.edu/cocciainstitute [3]

Source URL: http://ftp.iitaly.org/magazine/focus/facts-stories/article/human-rights-in-italian-foreign-policy-ambassador-giulio-terzi

Links
[1] http://ftp.iitaly.org/files/foto-di-copertina1238714895jpg
[2] http://www.i-italy.us/photo/photo
[3] http://www.chss.montclair.edu/cocciainstitute