

NEWS

Tremonti Sees Quick Economic Bounce After War Ends

Economy Minister Giulio Tremonti said Italy's economic growth would outstrip the downgraded forecasts issued on Saturday by the International Monetary Fund at a G-20 meeting in Ottawa.

Mr. Tremonti said he saw 2 percent growth this year, compared to the IMF's 1.8 percent estimate, and 2.3 percent next year, almost twice the IMF's new 1.2 percent figure.

"There is a lot of uncertainty," Mr. Tremonti said. "But we shouldn't add pessimism to that."

He conceded that the global economic slowdown, coupled with waning business confidence, "has taken a toll on Italy's short-run growth prospects."

But he and Domenico Siniscalco, the director-general of the Italian Treasury, said the large number of small-time Italian entrepreneurs makes the nation's economy "particularly flexible," and that "after the war there will be a

bounce-back," driven by cheaper oil and greater demand driven by lower interest rates.

The IMF's figures were "static," Mr. Tremonti said, while the government's own forecasts factored in the effects of planned policy interventions.

Antonio Fazio, governor of the Bank of Italy, joined Mr. Tremonti's admonitions against pessimism. He also noted that the IMF had released rosy forecasts last year that proved far off the mark. "We should avoid making the opposite mistake," the central bank chief said.

Lower interest rates reduce the cost of financing debt, providing extra benefits for highly-indebted countries like Italy, Mr. Siniscalco noted. He also said he expected a burst of late-year spending as Italians, worried by the perceived risks of international travel, make domestic holiday plans for the Christmas season.

-C.E.

Ready for Anything

Chievo fans get ready for the Sunday night game against cross-town rival Verona. The donkey is the local hamlet's response to its longtime neighbor's jeer that Chievo would play in soccer's Serie A "when asses have wings." Chievo is atop the league, and sought to stretch its lead in the game that was underway at press time.



ANSA SPA

Comment

The Culture of Fear

By Dominic Standish
Special to Italy Daily

Since Sept. 11, Italy has been increasingly gripped by a climate of fear that is stifling many of our basic freedoms.

The recent 'truck bomb' rumor illustrates this trend. The government ordered roadblocks on all major highways because a truck carrying explosives was said to be traveling in the country. Traffic jams 70 kilometers long ruined many peoples' journeys as the security forces checked vehicles.

Police panicked when they stopped a truck with a reference in the driver's documents to 'laden'. Suspecting a link to Osama Bin Laden, they called in explosive experts, sniffer dogs, anti-terrorist and anti-Mafia units and surrounded the truck for ten hours. But the truck was only carrying wine, and the driver's lack of Italian meant he had been unable to explain that laden is German for load.

Numerous alerts linked to terrorism have delayed flights and frozen bank accounts. Police raided locations allegedly linked to the Al Barakaat organization in five Italian cities last week. U.S. investigators say they suspect that Al Barakaat is linked to bin Laden's Al Qaeda network, although no proof has been presented. A Somali doctor from Florence who is under investigation, Hussein Mahamud Abdulkadir, says he has only sent funds to families in Somalia via Al Barakaat.

That a culture of fear is increasingly dominating government policy is not simply a consequence of the Sept. 11 attacks and the growing concerns about terrorism. The previous government began making key decisions according to the 'precautionary principle.' According to this principle, preventative measures can be implemented to deal with a threat even when no evidence of the problem has been identified.

This approach guided the last government's responses to the fears about depleted uranium in ammunition, foot and mouth disease in cattle and electromagnetic field pollution (which centered on the controversy over Vatican Radio transmissions).

In none of these cases was any evidence of a threat to human health proven before policies were implemented that had profound implications for the lives of many Italians. Nor have any cases of human illness due to these problems been scientifically identified in Italy since these panics began. Why should we accept important policy decisions when they are based on fear, not evidence?

The eminent sociologist Frank Furedi first identified how these trends were developing in western societies in his book "The Culture of Fear" (Cassell, 1997). While many commentators have located the source of our fear in the Sept. 11 attacks, it is important to understand that the attacks merely accelerated existing trends.

As it turns out, the culture of fear is more pervasive than terrorism. Many

responded to events like the tragic plane crashes in Milan in October and in New York last week with a sigh of relief when the authorities said terrorism was not the cause. However, such accidents have only added to concerns about flying and the wider culture of fear.

But Sept. 11 not only deepened the culture of fear, it has also extended the accompanying restrictions on freedom. On Nov. 10, The New York Times ran an editorial about the detention of over 11,000 people suspected of terrorism connections in the United States, often without disclosure of their identities or charges, and government wiretaps on lawyer-client communication. In practice, this eavesdropping has suspended the constitutional right to effective counsel. The editorial states, "Civil liberties are eroding, and there is no evidence that the reason is anything more profound than fear and frustration."

When Italians have claimed that "we are all Americans" after Sept. 11, they express shared trepidation. But are we also witnessing eroding freedoms in Italy?

On Oct. 12, the present government announced new powers to tap telephones, bypassing normal privacy rules, and the deployment of 4,000 troops at vulnerable locations. A government decree on Oct. 18 gave police the right to tap phones without judicial permission for 48 hours.

With this approval, police can now acquire or receive money or weapons and can use false identity papers while undercover.

There have been many examples of house raids and of people with non-Italian names being arrested and deported with little evidence against them. Five Afghan nationals were arrested near the American Embassy to the Vatican for what police called 'strange behavior,' including carrying a map with a route and a number of places indicated. But I call on the government to provide some information on their recent phone taps and arrests so that we can put such activities under public scrutiny.

We should not accept repression of our freedoms due to the climate of fear. The irony is that greater security measures only make us feel more insecure by increasing our fear of other people.

More state restrictions of our freedoms will not prevent terrorism.

Undemocratic Saudi Arabia could not prevent terrorist attacks in 1996, and militarized Israel cannot stop suicide bombers. The harsh truth is that no level of security controls can rule out attacks on the scale of that by the Sept. 11 hijackers with zealous disregard for their own lives and the lives of others.

We need to challenge the link between the culture of fear and repressive measures. If we do not, how many of our civil liberties will be taken away in the name of safety?

Mr. Standish runs Veneto-based Progress Consulting. Comments to him can be addressed to dstandish@europa.com

Former Afghan King Is Ready For 'Sacrifice'

By Nicole Winfield
Associated Press

ROME — The former king of Afghanistan called the situation in his country "very grave" but told The Sunday Telegraph he was "ready to sacrifice my health, my time and whatever is left of my life to serve my nation."

On Sunday, Hamid Sidig, an aide to Mohammad Zahir Shah, who has lived here since being ousted from the throne in 1973, welcomed indications that the Northern Alliance had agreed to meet outside Afghanistan to start talks among various tribal groups on forming a new broad-based government.

Mr. Sidig also noted that the Alliance had already committed to start such talks during meetings in Rome last month, before its troops overran Kabul.

The Alliance's foreign minister, Abdullah, told a press conference in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, that the talks could take place soon, in Germany, Switzerland or Austria. He made his statement after meeting with James F. Dobbins, the U.S. representative to the Afghan opposition who was in Rome last week to meet with the former king.

Mr. Zahir Shah has been seen by many as having an important role to play in a post-Taliban Afghanistan. Although he has lived in Rome for 28 years, he is still remembered fondly by many of Afghanistan's various ethnic groups for the relative peace that prevailed during his 40-year reign.

The United Nations has recommended he chair an urgent meeting of Afghan groups to get the post-Taliban process started. However, advisers have said the former monarch would likely send a delegation to any initial meeting.

In a statement released Sunday, Mr. Zahir Shah said he was willing to return to Afghanistan and was ready "to serve his country and his people, to the best of his ability in the path for peace and unity in Afghanistan."

Correction

Formatting errors in the weekend edition of Italy Daily led to glitches in the story on Fiat's launch of the new Lancia Thesis. The story was written by Neil Winton, the European automobile correspondent of Reuters, and not by Italy Daily staff. And a glitch led to the garbling of the third and fourth paragraphs, which should read: "Doesn't photograph well" was one comment on the car at the Stresa launch. "Fat-faced" and "overweight" were also overheard. But some journalists at this Lago Maggiore resort (Stresa) also used words like "stately" and, yes, "stylish."

A number of analysts believe that the Turin-based carmaker's attempt to revive the ailing Lancia brand is a blind alley and that the 405 million euro development costs of the Thesis would be better spent on further developing the Alfa Romeo line.

Next Year's Giro Will Tour Europe

COMPILED BY STAFF FROM DISPATCHES

Cycling's Giro d'Italia will take in five other countries next year to mark the introduction of euro notes and coins in 2002, organizers said this weekend as they unveiled next year's course.

The three-week tour, won last year by Italy's Gilberto Simoni, is scheduled to begin May 11 in the Dutch town of Groningen and will visit Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg and France before concluding June 2 in front of Milan's Duomo.

The Tour of Italy is doing a mini-tour of Europe to celebrate the adoption of the new single currency in 12 countries, organizers said. The race is starting outside Italy for the seventh time in its 93-year history. It's never before started in the Netherlands.

The program, unveiled in Milan by Candido Cannavo, editor-in-chief of Gazzetta dello Sport, the sponsor of the race, and Carmine Catellano, the director of the race, establishes a 20-stage course covering 3,333.5 kilometers.

Riders will face an individual 6.5-kilometer time-trial stage in Gron-

ing and head to Germany's northeastern town of Munster on day two. Belgium will host the end of the third stage before the race reaches Luxembourg, with France concluding the foreign venture with a stage finishing in Strasbourg.

The 85th running of the Giro will also cross the Tuscany and Umbria regions and take in climbs in the Alps and Apennine mountains, with peak altitudes reaching 2,230 meters above sea level on Pordoi Pass during the 16th stage from Conegliano to Corvara in the Dolomites.

Next year's course will be steeper than this year's, but also shows a trend toward shorter courses.

The 2001 race was overshadowed by drug-taking allegations. Eighty-six people were put under investigation for possessing, selling or using banned drugs after police raided riders' hotel rooms in San Remo.

Legal proceedings have since begun against at least 50 people on charges of violating a ban on so-called doping, which is seen as fraudulently altering the outcome of athletic competitions under Italian law.

(Bloomberg, AP)

People

It was a bocce bash in Modena for the birthday of 89-year-old Fernando Pavarotti, father of Luciano. Fernando, a bocce aficionado, plays frequently with friends, so the tournament, which ended Saturday night, was a gift from his son. The guest list for Saturday's party included Nicoletta Mantovani, who arrived with Luciano, and the Rossini Chorus, a local opera group that once had both Fernando and Luciano as members. "It was a present my father asked for, and I was happy to be able to give it to him," Pavarotti said. The younger Pavarotti even consented to play for a while, losing soundly.

The Italian Soccer League's disciplinary committee on Saturday confirmed that SS Lazio defender Jaap Stam would be temporarily suspended from all sporting activity after testing positive for the performance-enhancing steroid nandrolone. The decision came after an announcement Friday by CONI, the Italian Olympic Committee, which is in charge of all sports regulations. The committee said Stam, a Dutch international player, had tested positive for nandrolone after a Serie A match against Atalanta on Oct. 13. Officials had said that they would not make a decision on banning Stam until they received the results of a second test. "There's a bit of panic in the locker room among the players because everyone knows what Stam is like," said Andrea Campi, who heads Lazio's medical team. "He doesn't even take vitamins. Now, everyone is concerned about taking these anti-doping tests."

Travel

Catania's Fontanarossa airport will be closed from 8 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. on Tuesday and Wednesday as work is done on the control tower.

The state railway will increase prices as of Jan. 1, with the variable hikes averaging 4.2 percent for most routes. Regional and local train fares will not be affected, while Eurostar and Intercity routes may see steeper increases, officials at Ferrovie dello Stato said, adding that details will be available in coming days.

Alitalia has started code-sharing flights with both Air France and Delta Air Lines. The alliance allows customers to accumulate frequent-flyer miles on the airline of their choice.

Air Sicily will take over the British Airways service between Catania and Rome on Dec. 1. Flights are three times a day each way and will initially cost 99,000 lire.

Air transport workers postponed a 24-hour strike scheduled for Nov. 19 until Dec. 3. Employee representatives made the decision after being invited to meet with the government on Nov. 21.

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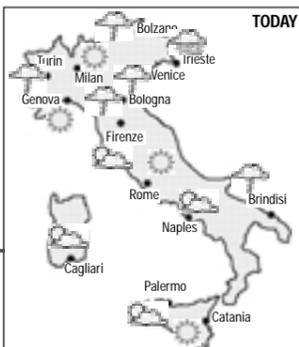
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temp	min c/f	max c/f
Bologna	7/45	12/54
Bolzano	4/39	13/55
Brindisi	13/55	19/66
Cagliari	10/50	19/66
Catania	11/52	23/73
Florence	10/50	13/55
Genoa	10/50	18/64
Milan	3/37	17/63
Naples	8/46	18/64
Palermo	12/54	20/68
Rome	11/52	16/61
Trieste	3/37	12/54
Turin	12/54	16/61
Venice	3/37	13/55



SUNNY
PARTLY CLOUDY
CLOUDY
RAIN
THUNDERSTORMS
SNOW
FOG

temp	min c/f	max c/f
Bologna	5/41	9/48
Bolzano	3/37	9/48
Brindisi	14/57	16/61
Cagliari	15/59	17/63
Catania	11/52	18/64
Florence	8/46	12/54
Genoa	7/45	13/55
Milan	2/36	10/50
Naples	10/50	17/63
Palermo	14/57	16/61
Rome	9/48	16/61
Trieste	3/37	11/52
Turin	1/34	13/55
Venice	3/37	9/48

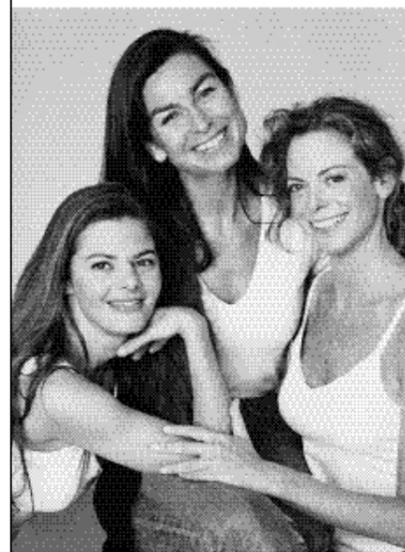


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