

NEWS



Powerful things come in small packages

One of ten mini fire engines to put out fires in hard-to-reach places that are to be presented today in Piaggio di Pontedera, near Pisa. The experimental fire buster has been conceived with Italy's historic centers, full of tiny, often windy streets, in mind. Firefighters in Bari, Bergamo, Genoa, Palermo, Perugia and Rome, as well as the Islands of Ischia and Capri will get to test drive the vehicles.

ANSA/SAI

Legambiente says Italy can't protect its cultural heritage

By Alessandra Rizzo
The Associated Press

ROME: Threatened by pollution, poor maintenance and illegal construction, a third of Italy's world heritage is endangered, including such treasures as Pompeii's ancient ruins, an environmental group said Wednesday.

The group, Legambiente, has studied 36 cities, monuments and archaeological sites which are on UNESCO's World Heritage List. The sites include Venice, Pisa's Leaning Tower and the historic centers of Rome, Florence, Naples and Urbino, a hill town in northern Italy where Renaissance artist Raphael was born.

It is "one of the great Italian paradoxes — the fortune of having a unique heritage of art, culture and history ... and the inability to protect it," said Legambiente President Ermete Realacci.

Most of the problems singled out by Legambiente are well-known, such as pollution taking its toll on the centuries-old centers of Rome, Florence and Naples, and Venice being eroded by the polluted waters of its lagoon.

"We wanted to call attention to the

macroscopic problems, so that they wouldn't be forgotten," said Federica Sacco of Legambiente.

Legambiente also raised concern about illegal construction surrounding Pompeii, the ancient Roman city destroyed by an eruption of Mount Vesuvius in A.D. 79, and the 5th century-Valley of Temples in Agrigento, considered the finest grouping of classic Greek temples outside of Greece. Italian authorities have been working for years to knock down some of the illegal homes built near the Agrigento ruins, but opposition in the economically underdeveloped south, including from some local politicians, has been fierce.

Italy's national budget for decades has been stingy on funds for preserving and protecting the nation's vast cultural heritage.

Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's government has plans to put state property in private hands by granting concessions for use or by sale to raise cash and, it says, improve preservation of the heritage.

Italy's Culture Ministry said Wednesday it has long raised the alarm, not only over the monuments on UNESCO's list, but for all Italian heritage.

People

It's fitting that Ansel Adams is to be the keynote photographer of a photo exhibit celebrating mountains in 2002, which the United Nations has declared the International Year of the Mountains: Not only was the American snapper enamored of the mountains of his native land, but this year marks the centenary of his birth, adding significance to the tribute. "PHOTOGRAPHICA, 30 days of photography in Biella," now in its third edition, opened this month at the cloister of the "Museum of the Territory" in this pretty town nestled in the mountains that form the heart of Piedmont's textile region. The show includes black-and-white works by Adams, as well as by his student **Luciano Monti**, who ably emulated his teacher using the same techniques. There are also works by local photographers including **Vittorio Sella**, **Mario Piacenza** and **Vittorio Besso**, who, as mountain boys do, lived their subject intimately. PHOTOGRAPHICA includes workshops too, this year exploring the relationship between photography and geology and nature. Photographs of the show's peaked protagonists are to adorn the walls of Biella restaurants as well.

For the 10th year in a row the Venice section of the "Walter Tobagi Cultural Association" will host a writing workshop, bringing together aspiring authors and their published counterparts. This year the 60-hour course, which kicked off in Mestre last night, will focus on short stories, "probably the hardest form because you have to condense so much information in not much space," said **Annalisa Bruni**, the coordinator of the initiative that runs through April. Bruni, a journalist, short-story author and radio scriptwriter with several national prizes to her name, has been holding writing workshops since 1995. Novelists **Tiziano Scarpa**, **Nicoletta Vallorani** and **Carlo Lucarelli** will be among the guest authors come to share their secrets.

Comment

Pope's concessions to faiths open door to manipulation

By Dominic Standish
Special to Italy Daily

After Pope John Paul II's speech to the Italian Parliament on Nov. 14, many commentators interpreted the event and his words as a reassertion of Christianity. It was the first speech by a pontiff to the Italian Parliament and he did call Christianity "the lifeblood of Italy."

But a closer examination of his speech reveals his willingness to embrace faiths from a variety of cultural backgrounds. The pope stated that expanding Europe should rest "on the ethical foundations that were once at its base, making space at the same time for the richness and diversity of the cultures and traditions that characterize individual nations."

The Italian Union of Islamic Communities, meeting in Modena on Nov. 15, responded to the pope's speech by thanking him for rejecting an approach based on a clash of civilizations between Islam and the West.

Last January, the pope led prayers for peace in Assisi alongside Jews, Baptists, Sikhs, Buddhists, Muslims and others, as crosses were removed from a convent near the tomb of St. Francis to accommodate various faiths. While the pontiff clearly wants to hold the line in defense of Catholicism, he continually faces pressure to give ground to other religions.

This is also evident in the country that surrounds the pope's mini-state. The current Italian government would like to promote Catholicism, as illustrated by members of the government seeking to enforce the display of the Crucifix in public buildings. But simultaneously, the government has repeatedly given recognition to other religions.

Last June, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi signed a bill on "religious freedom." This included a provision that all tax paying citizens could assign 0.8 percent of their tax bills to any religious group. Previously, only congregations with a specific accord with the state could receive the funds.

Gianni Baget Bozzo, one of Berlusconi's advisors, argued that the state "would end up funding the factions which are closest to terrorism" when Islamic groups receive money. Commentator Alberto Carosa suggested that Italy could become the first western state to direct funds to Islam's jihad.

Berlusconi's approval of this bill indicated his conversion to cultural diversi-

ty after the remarks he made last year on the superiority of western civilization over Islamic countries in terms of freedom.

The new etiquette of cultural diversity in international affairs led many world leaders to put pressure on Berlusconi to apologize for these comments. I believe he was wrong to apologize, as anyone who supports democracy needs to be able to establish where it is more advanced.

Berlusconi's incorporation of multiculturalism into government policy has led to other political problems. In particular, state provisions for mosques and Islamic cultural centers has become increasingly controversial after Sept. 11.

The state's financial support for mosques has long been contested by Northern League campaigns in Lodi, Varese and Venice. In Naples, the regional government's earmarking of €1 million to build a mosque provoked uproar.

But since the United States Treasury named the Islamic Cultural Institute in Milan as "the most important base of Al Qaeda in Europe," 10 mosques and Islamic centers in Italy have been identified as support bases for illicit groups. Over 4,000 people have been placed under observation. Many Muslims have been arrested through their links to mosques and cultural centers on terrorism charges. Flimsy evidence of imminent terrorist attacks has led to few convictions on such charges.

The state's provision for mosques and Islamic centers has created enormous problems for those requesting recognition for their faith and for the state that gives it. However, the principal problem with the state's manipulation of multiculturalism is that it strengthens the state at the expense of the whole population.

This was demonstrated by the debate on fingerprinting non-European Union immigrants in the government's new immigration legislation. Leaders of the Union of Italian Jewish communities condemned this "discriminatory" measure. Deputy Prime Minister Gianfranco Fini responded: "The government has pledged it will implement fingerprinting without a distinction between Italians and immigrants to ensure proper identification."

The leader of Rome's Jewish community, Riccardo Pacifici, was satisfied with the government's response, stating that Italian Jews "are not against the measure, but oppose the fact it only con-

cerns a specific group of people."

Lucio Stanca, the minister for Technological Innovation, proposed that universal fingerprinting becomes part of the planned digital identity cards.

Rather than the pope's speech strengthening the Catholic direction of government policy, his concessions to other faiths are more likely to increase the government's manipulation of multiculturalism for repressive purposes.

This article was given as a speech to the Institute of Ideas Conference Seeking Attention, at the French Institute in London on Nov. 16. Comments can be addressed to dstandish@europe.com

Travel

Rail workers have postponed a 24-hour walkout originally scheduled for Nov. 16 to Nov. 30, Italy's state railway said Monday. The strike will start at 9 p.m. and is part of a contract dispute. Since only one union out of several is involved, some trains were expected to run.

Highway gas station operators have confirmed a strike for Nov. 27 and 28, when pumps will be closed for 24-hours each day. The strike only affects highway and ring road gas stations, but some of these could remain open as not every union is striking. Gas station owners claim that the contract-renewal negotiations will force the price of gasoline up by five cents per liter.

Municipal transportation workers have called a strike on Nov. 29 where not even essential services will be guaranteed. No public urban transportation will run for 24-hours.

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decrease a day from now on."

"I told the Jesuits years ago," he went on, referring to the prestigious Biblicum University, catercorner from the Gregorian and a stone's throw from the Trevi Fountain.

"I said they were going too far with all that Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic and Sanskrit while assuming everyone knew Latin."

"Now look where we are. At a very low level. Very low."

In fact, the decree published in last week's edition of the Vatican daily Osservatore Romano notes that "with the passing of time, the Latin language is either not taught at all in schools or is considered a secondary subject."

Even in theology faculties and major seminaries, it went on, "as other theological and pastoral disciplines have been added, gradually less attention has been devoted to Canon Law and the Latin language."

Foster sees no problem in recruiting

teachers for the new courses, "even women, of course — they already teach, that's not an issue."

He learned only last week that his own famously eclectic and wide-ranging course — where students are thrown tidbits of Church Latin along with the street smarts of Plautus and the eloquence of his beloved Cicero — was due for the chop.

But authorities at the "Greg," as the university is fondly known, could well be forced into a rethink as seminarians start signing up in droves, aware of what lies ahead of them.

Until now, as longtime student of "Father Reggie," ex-journalist Shirley Herbert says: "It's often been the classicists, not those entering the priesthood, who've shown more knowledge of Latin texts."

The Chicago-born Herbert, 67, aspires to the Fifth Experience where only Latin is allowed and is a regular on the trips — Cicero's Tomb, the Forum, the Palatine, Horace's Villa — which the Latin-loving cleric organizes year-round. She's almost as enthusiastic as her teacher about the unexpected decree.

"It's a step in the right direction — and just when they were going to close him down," she says.

But one possible hurdle to the reform, Father Foster says, might be objections raised by authorities who have been trying to push recruitments through in the face of falling vocations.

"People have been coming in from abroad and doing their studies in two years on a so-called fast-track. The new decree, which extends the study of Canon Law from two to three years and makes Latin compulsory for all three, might set up some resistance to that," he said.

But Foster ended by sounding a hopeful note that, at least inside the Church, students will still be brought to the level of pitch required to understand writings in their original form.

"It's like preserving the harpsichord concertos of Bach or Handel. You've got them. But you've got no one who can play them any more. To the people coming in now, the texts might as well be in Chinese."

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temp	min c/f	max c/f
Bologna	6/43	10/50
Bolzano	3/37	10/50
Brindisi	10/50	16/61
Cagliari	10/50	17/63
Catania	10/50	19/66
Florence	8/46	14/57
Genoa	10/50	14/57
Milan	2/36	10/50
Naples	11/52	17/63
Palermo	16/61	21/70
Rome	10/50	17/63
Trieste	11/52	15/59
Turin	2/36	9/48
Venice	6/43	12/54

- SUNNY
- PARTLY CLOUDY
- CLOUDY
- RAIN
- THUNDERSTORMS
- SNOW
- FOG



temp	min c/f	max c/f
Bologna	5/41	10/50
Bolzano	1/34	10/50
Brindisi	10/50	17/63
Cagliari	11/52	17/63
Catania	9/48	21/70
Florence	8/46	13/55
Genoa	10/50	14/57
Milan	1/34	11/52
Naples	11/52	19/66
Palermo	15/59	19/66
Rome	10/50	17/63
Trieste	8/46	14/57
Turin	2/36	10/50
Venice	5/41	12/54



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