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Amelia Boynton Robinson

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## Civil Rights Leader Uplifts Europe's Youth

by Ortrun Cramer

Amelia Boynton Robinson, the “Grand Old Lady” of the American civil rights movement, is no stranger in Europe. She has visited the continent repeatedly over the past two decades, organizing support for Lyndon H. LaRouche and the Schiller Institute, of which she is the vice chairman in the United States.

But the response to this Fall's tour has been different from all the others. The Iraq War and its catastrophic aftermath reveal a lack of competent military and political leadership in the United States. The spiralling economic crisis, which leads to a collapse of infrastructure, growing unemployment, the destruction of health-care and social security systems, as well as to cutbacks in public education, shows that there is no competent economic policy either in the United States or in Europe.

Strikes against foreclosure of industries, student demonstrations against cutbacks in funding for education, as well as demonstrations against general austerity measures, are the order of the day in all European capitals. The much-needed policy re-orientation sought by the demonstrators, is not offered by any of the established governments, political parties, or social institutions.

Thus, it comes as no surprise that the announcement of Mrs. Robinson's visit meets an enthusiastic response everywhere. Above all, young people showed up, to learn from the 92-year-old what it means to overcome your fears, stand up for justice and fight. “You have to offer the best that the world has brought about: freedom and justice,” she told an audience of 45 members and friends of the growing European LaRouche Youth Movement in Berlin. “We must be convinced that we can change the world, and get even the most evil people to reverse their course. Look into the mirror and tell yourselves, that you will give the best.”

She explained what evils we confront, including historically from her experience in the fight for civil rights, which started back in the 1930s in Selma, Alabama. She also very strongly rejected the Iraq War policy of the Bush Administration. Already in the first days of her visit to Europe, she had intervened with the U.S. Veterans' Administration, after press reports appeared which described the poor medical care given to veterans, including many who returned from fighting in Iraq. During her speeches and interviews, Amelia took up

this scandal. Above all, she took on the economic injustices everywhere around the globe. The only man who is committed and capable to bring about this needed change, end the war in Iraq, and initiate a new, just world economic order, is Lyndon LaRouche, she told her young audiences.

### ‘Exhaustion? I Don't Know What the Word Means’

In **Italy**, she addressed well over 1,500 people in meetings in schools, colleges, and universities. She gave many interviews to local and regional press, and she spoke at events organized by local administrations, in her honor. She visited Milan, Ravenna, Rome, and the southern Italian cities of Salerno, Eboli, and Matera. She emphasized the need for European countries to tell the United States to “get out of Iraq.” The 19 Italians who died in Iraq, she said, “should serve as a wake-up call for Italian young people to work for a policy of cooperation, understanding and justice around the world.”

Amelia had been invited to the city of Matera, to address a conference on the role of women in fighting for social justice. When she appeared, she found herself in the middle of a political firestorm. The government had recently decided, on the grounds of “national security,” to build an underground nuclear waste repository near a small town in the area, without consulting regional and local authorities. As the students whom she was to address, were all on strike, Amelia was taken to a demonstration at a train station near the proposed site. She brought the lessons of the civil rights movement to the young people, telling them they had to fight for the rights of their people, and that civil disobedience is a legitimate method to do so. But, the protest must be non-violent and include all people from the area, so as to create unity, not division.

On the question of nuclear waste, she had something to say, which may have come as a surprise in an atmosphere heavily influenced by irrational “anti-nuclearism”: “The country must invest the resources necessary to mobilize scientists to find a solution to the question of nuclear waste. Why should we bury it in the ground, when we can mobilize our scientists to find ways to make it useful?” In a press conference, later, she stressed that nuclear energy must be used to help poor countries develop. “The wrong use of nuclear energy is that intended by the people in the Bush Administration, who have declared their intention to extend war to Iran, Syria, and North Korea, and who could push the button and destroy our entire civilization.”

In **Germany**, Mrs. Robinson addressed young people in schools, students' clubs, and church congregations in Frankfurt, Offenbach, Cologne, Biedenkopf, Berlin, Augsburg, and Munich, so far. As an article in the *Oberhessische Presse*, from the university town of Marburg, underlined, she was very outspoken and optimistic concerning the LaRouche Presidential campaign. The paper wrote: “Forty years lie be-



*Amelia Boynton Robinson autographs her autobiography for a young participant at one of her meetings in Berlin.*

tween the freedom march to Montgomery and LaRouche's march to the White House. And as lively as Amelia Boynton-Robinson speaks about the freedom struggle of the underprivileged African-Americans during the time of Martin Luther King, so energetically does she present her opinion, that today, the main task is to provide a job for every American. LaRouche, she says can achieve this, since he has a program that would get the unemployed and hopeless Americans off the street."

Indicative of the response of the young people listening to Amelia, is a report from a local paper from a town near Augsburg, in Bavaria. She addressed students at a school which had been attended by a young man who recently joined the LaRouche Youth Movement. The paper writes: "The charisma of the old lady fascinates the students of the school. When she suddenly starts singing, and thereby demonstrates, how she strengthened herself in the difficult period of her life (in the civil rights fight), or when she recites her own poems, the students in the back rows stretch their necks, to have a look at the elderly lady. Many watch with intense concentration, others just let her words sink in. . . . When one hears, how difficult a protest march can be, how one's feet hurt and how hard it is to see beloved people die, just because they fought for justice, then black-and-white letters and printed pictures turn into real, ordinary people. And one understands, that even as a simple citizen, one can move something. Perhaps, one of those pupils will sometime turn out to be somebody who will have others hanging on his or her every word."

Noteworthy of her individual meetings in Germany with political figures, was a discussion with a civil rights leader of the former German Democratic Republic, who was deeply moved by the meeting, since, as he stressed, it was the exam-

ple of Martin Luther King and the U.S. civil rights movement, that encouraged him to become a theologian, and finally to pick up the fight in Germany.

In between her meetings in Germany, Mrs. Robinson went up to **Denmark**. In Copenhagen, the LaRouche Youth Movement has been recruiting many new members and friends recently, and these young people took the responsibility to organize the visit. Twelve thousand leaflets were distributed, announcing a public event; hundreds of posters were put up. Over 100 people showed up at the meeting, listening to Amelia, and posing many questions in the discussion period. A fight was taken up with the administration of a school, which had originally been willing to invite Amelia, but then tried to withdraw, under political pressure. But the youth just did not take "no" for an answer, and kept mobilizing teachers and students, to have the meeting in the university.

Amelia was also invited to a very popular TV program, "Deadline." It showed a short summary of the civil rights struggle, and Amelia's role in it, before the moderator presented her in an interview. Most of the questions were on narrow issues such as Affirmative Action, but Amelia insisted throughout, that the main challenge, then as now, is to fight for justice. "There is a lot of injustice today, from the Bush Administration down," she insisted. Justice, she said, is inseparable and must be fought for globally.

Also in Denmark, she had meetings with political representatives—the youth movement had approached every single deputy of the national Parliament, urging them to meet her. She underlined afterward, that it was of "mutual benefit; we both had to give something to each other."

Before she returns home for Christmas, the civil rights leader will visit Leipzig, Dresden, Magdeburg, Hanover, Osnabrueck and Muenster in Germany, and then proceed to France, where she will address young people in Paris, Rennes, Nantes, and Lyon.

Clearly, those thousands of youth will be changed, living through the struggle for justice that continues to form the center of Amelia's life. Several of those who participated in one of the meetings, expressed this. But imitation, she told them, while signing her book, *Bridge Across Jordan* (which has also been published in a German translation) is not enough: "Do not just accept what I say. Find out for yourselves, how you can go this way."

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