

## **“We Are Also Italians”. America Oggi. Demonstrating Against a “discrimination”**

Riccardo Chioni (April 24, 2010)



In N.Y. in front of the Italian Consulate, an event to support the only Italian-language newspaper published in the U.S. drew the attention of the American press last week. It wanted to cover the “discrimination” complaint lodged by America Oggi against the Italian government concerning publishing Italian newspapers abroad.

On Park Avenue about two hundred supporters gathered in the fight to save America Oggi, including readers, representatives from the Comitato degli Italiani All’Estero (Council of Italians Living Abroad), businessmen, and associates.

The signs which were visible to pedestrians and motorists contained slogans like “Help Us Like Padania,” “We Are Also Italians,” and “Bonaiuti Won’t Help Us.” They made reference to the Italian government’s recent decision to cut - by 50 percent - funding grants to publish newspapers abroad,



which threatens the survival of four other Italian-language newspapers in addition to America Oggi.

The government’s decision only affects the foreign press and was viewed as “discrimination aimed at second-class Italian citizens” by the Italian-American community that religiously goes to newsstands every day to buy a measured amount of news and information printed in their native language.

At a time when diplomatic authorities in New York boast that a record number of students in American public schools have chosen to learn Italian, it seems woefully out of step to deny those students an important educational tool like America Oggi, which is provided free to Italian classes.

In his recent editorial, the editor-in-chief of America Oggi, Andrea Mantineo, explained why he characterized the action as discrimination. “The newspapers published in Italy, those on behalf of political parties, cooperatives, dioceses, and foundations linked to a political party, receive grants in full. Even minority language newspapers published in Italy such as the Dolomiten di Bolzano in German and the Primorski Dnevnik in Slovenian continue to benefit from full government grants. For them, there are no funding cuts,” emphasized Mantineo.

America Oggi, a daily presence for 22 years, has proved to be a link for the Italian American community throughout seven states on the east coast where the newspaper is distributed – and the very real threat of losing this “bridge” to Italy makes many Italian Americans nervous.

[Quintino Cianfaglione](#) [2], the president of COMITES, the Council of Italians Living Abroad, also participated on the sidewalk outside the Consulate on Park Avenue. Cianfaglione characterized the gathering as a “protest to save our newspaper. Even though America Oggi has tended to lean to the left, I think that it could be non-partisan, even if the right does want its own [newspaper]. But this is a discussion that should take place later on; right now we must save our newspaper, especially since forty jobs need to be protected.”

Vincenzo Marra, [President of Ilica](#), [3] an organization for the dissemination of Italian language, speaks of “cultural regression.”

“The fear is that we are in a period of cultural decline; this not about malice or even prejudice, it is about ignorance that is reflected in television programs that we watch abroad. We must send positive messages. Perhaps it is absent-mindedness (on the part of the Italian government, et al) but we must come out in large numbers to illustrate their mistake.”

A businessman in the leather clothing industry, Adolfo Cosi said that he is happy to support his newspaper with his presence.

“I am glad to have participated by showing my support for America Oggi, and hopefully change the hearts and minds of Italian politicians.”

For Paul Palombo, a former professor at [Columbia University](#) [4], “it is s a point of pride.”

“For two reasons. First,” he explains, “I express my support for America Oggi, a newspaper worth saving and one that has an extraordinary history. So we must save it for our history. In Italy, they should really think about it, because we take this as a slap in the face of all Italian Americans, with everything they have done and continue to do for our country. The Italian political class,” continues the professor, “has the foresight to correct mistakes. The second reason concerns the participation of the community; I don’t recall it being so active for the past fifty years or so.”

Mantineo was received along with a delegation in the Consul General’s office where the situation with America Oggi was discussed. [Consul General Francesco Talò](#) [5] promised that he would relay the demands and concerns of the Italian community to Rome.

“The massive presence of the community,” said Mantineo, “encourages us to try and recover the funding. I did not have to say much to Talò because he already has a thorough understanding of the



situation. This is not a protest against the Consulate, but against the decision made in Rome.”

The fifty percent funding cuts also apply retroactively, and this has placed the newspaper in an untenable financial situation since its projected budget relies heavily on the government subsidies to cover basic operating costs.

America Oggi is also doing its part to spread the word, in addition to the Italian language, Italian style, tourism, and the Made in Italy label in the most coveted piazza – New York, the media capital of the world.

Thanks to Riccardo Chioni. Published in Italian by [America Oggi](#) [6]

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