

ITEM No 7357/55

SPECIAL ATTENTION: Mr. Hood  
Mr. Griffith  
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ITALY

MAN-IN-THE-STREET INTERVIEWS ON CURRENT AFFAIRS.

SOURCE ROME: RFE reporter.

DATE OF OBSERVATION: Current period.

EVALUATION COMMENT: None.

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While covering the World Esperanto Congress in BOLOGNA and visiting MILAN at the beginning of August, our reporter interviewed several Italians on the subject of the Four Power Conference in GENEVA, the unification of Germany, President EISENHOWER'S proposal for reciprocal control of armaments, and the international relaxation of tension. Most of the persons interviewed were either workmen or "lower middle class." There was also a Swede and a Dutchman whom the reporter met at the Congress.

The first person interviewed was a 35-year-old barman from BOLOGNA. Speaking of the GENEVA Conference he said:

"In my opinion all these conferences do not mean a thing. It is facts that count, not a lot of words. The shooting down of a civil aircraft over Bulgaria was enough to prove the relaxation of tension policy which animates the Russian bloc. On the other hand, I think the GENEVA Conference was useful because it tried to level out the differences between the two blocs."

When he was asked what he thought about the unification of Germany, he answered:

"Germany will be united whether the Russians want it or not, and then we shall be back where we were, for there will be another war. I know the Germans only too well, for I fought shoulder to shoulder with them for five years.

"As for President EISENHOWER, I do not understand why he made that proposal. If Russia accepts the proposals the photographs might serve the Americans in some way but -- the

(over)

Russians will not accept."

His comment on the international relaxation of tension was as follows: "There could be some relaxation of tension in every field, but in spite of this Russia will not let go its grip on the satellite countries. So it is no use deluding ourselves."

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There followed some conversation with a 54-year-old accountant from MILAN. He spoke of the GENEVA Conference as follows:

"It has not brought about anything new, because everything was prearranged. It was known that there will not be a war, not because Russia and America are frightened of each other, but because nobody wants war.

"With regard to the unification of Germany, yes, the country will have to be reunited, but in 30 years' time we shall be back where we were.

"As for President EISENHOWER's proposal, it seems sheer stupidity to me, because both America and Russia would be quite able to hide from each other anything they wanted to that had not been photographed."

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Our reporter then interviewed a Milanese woman of 38 who owns a bar. She said:

"I think the GENEVA Conference was useful. No, I do not think that Germany ought to be reunited because if it were, the Germans would soon start another war. As for President EISENHOWER's proposal, I do not believe that the Russians would allow any flights over their country. But in any case there is need for general disarmament and if this were carried out it would bring peace to all the world.

"I think it would be very difficult indeed for the satellite countries to obtain their liberty."

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The fourth person to give his opinions on the four questions was a 49-year-old tobacconist from MILAN. He said:

"I am not interested in the GENEVA Conference. I have read something about it in the papers but I really do not know exactly what it is all about.

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"Yes. I think Germany should be reunited, but it is a question for the statesmen as to whether she will be united to the East or the West.

"I do not know anything about President EISENHOWER's proposal, so I cannot give any opinion on it. As for disarmament, it should be carried out in any case.

"Sooner or later the Russians will let go their hold on the satellite countries."

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The most optimistic person was a 65-year-old owner of a boarding-house in MILAN.

He said: "The GENEVA Conference has been very useful, and is a great stride along the road to an enduring peace.

"I think the Germans should be reunited as soon as possible, and time will work in their favor.

"President EISENHOWER's proposal could be carried out in practice, I think. I am very optimistic over the collaboration between EISENHOWER and ZHUKOW. All the same, general disarmament is not possible, although arms control is.

"I think, the satellite countries will have a determined autonomy, but not full independence, but for that matter, neither have we."

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There followed a chat with a warehouseman at a building yard in MILAN. He said:

"I feel the GENEVA Conference has served some purpose, there is now the vague hope that the two blocs will come to some agreement.

"The problem of Germany is very difficult, because the Germans are always a menace to peace. In my opinion Germany should not be unified.

"The air check proposed by President EISENHOWER is perforce rather superficial. It would be much better to set up special control commissions. In any case, I am all for disarmament.

"The people's democracies like Poland and Hungary should belong to a United States of Europe which will be created sooner or later. Russia should not put anything in the way to their full independence."

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A 53-year-old warrant officer from MILAN said he thought that the GENEVA Conference had shown the good faith of the West.

"Up to the present," he continued, "the Russians have done nothing but smile, which is quite a thing for that glum-faced lot. My own feeling is that times are improving.

"Whether the Russians like it or not, Germany will be reunited. It takes a lot of time to convince the Russians and get some concessions out of them.

"President EISENHOWER's proposal was only a propaganda move, and I am sure that he himself did not believe it could be carried out. Russia quite definitely will not accept such a suggestion.

"I am afraid I am rather a pessimist about the satellite countries. Russia will never call her troops off their territory. Maybe Russia will make some changes in the disposition of the troops, and perhaps the people may be able to breathe a little more freely, but those countries will never get their liberty back unless there is a war. And nobody wants that."

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By chance, the reporter met a blacksmith of about 46 in a bar in MILAN. When he was asked what he thought about the GENEVA Conference he replied:

"I think it has been of use, like every good thing which comes along.

"It seems logical that Germany should be reunited. Russia will pull out and things will be as ADENAUER wants.

"There could never be any control over Russian disarmament, although America could be controlled because the people there are free and easier to check.

"There will never be any independence in the satellite countries until the Russians pull out."

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The next person with whom the reporter discussed the four questions was a young Italian lady who claimed to be 32 but looked a great deal older. She is an office worker in MILAN.

"I have not much time to read the newspapers," she said,  
(over)



"but I have read something about the Conference and it seems to me to have been very useful, because one does not hear people talking about war so much. I hate war.

"I do not see why Germany should not be unified. I am sure the Germans do not want war any more.

"President EISENHOWER put forward a very fine proposal, and I think Russia ought to accept it. Then there would not be any more secrets, because it will be possible to know what the others are doing. I really do not know how it could be done, but if he says it can -- and he certainly knows better than I do, for I know very little about these things -- then I suppose it can.

"The people behind the Iron Curtain? They ought to have their freedom, too, poor things. Now that things are going along better there is hope for them, too. America will take care of that."

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A 29-year-old student of the University of TURIN, whom our reporter met at the Esperanto Congress in BOLOGNA, answered the questions in this way:

"I am of the opinion that the Four Power Conference in GENEVA signals a new phase of reciprocal goodwill in the relations between Russia and the West. All this is to the advantage of world peace and the well-being of the peoples, and is therefore of great use.

"I think Germany will be reunited, but not immediately because it will take some time to persuade Russia to change her present attitude.

"President EISENHOWER's proposal has demonstrated America's good faith on the question of disarmament. If Russia does not accept it, it will prove that the Soviet Union has something to hide and will be a proof of bad faith.

"If these two problems, the reuniting of Germany and the disarmament question, were settled it would not be difficult for the satellite countries to obtain their independence."

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The editor of the Esperanto fortnightly "Heroldo," Mr. Teo JUNG, who is a Dutchman of about 50, made the following comment on the GENEVA Conference:

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"The GENEVA Conference has made a worthy contribution to international relaxation of tension. I am rather skeptical about the reunion of Germany. Perhaps the Conference has been a small step along the way toward the solution of this problem. President EISENHOWER's proposal was a decided move in the right direction toward solving the disarmament problem. The relaxation of tension may bring in its train the independence of the nations behind the Iron Curtain."

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Prof. MALGREM, President of the World Esperanto Association, was present at the interview with Mr. JUNG, and said:

"I have always been an optimist and I believe that this Conference will open a new phase in the history of the world. All the problems on which you have asked Mr. JUNG's opinion can be solved without recourse to arms. Germany will be reunited, there will be general disarmament, and it really does not matter whether this is carried out in the way suggested by President EISENHOWER or in any other way. Finally, I believe that the countries behind the Iron Curtain will recover their independence. One needs to be very patient, naturally, and there must be reciprocal understanding between the two blocs, but in the end everything will be solved. Esperanto could help to strengthen the friendly relations between the peoples of the East and the West."

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