

ORIGINAL: FRENCH  
24th January, 1958

NATO CONFIDENTIAL  
DOCUMENT  
AC/52-D/271/1

COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION AND CULTURAL RELATIONS

ITALIAN POLICY ON CULTURAL EXCHANGES WITH THE SOVIET BLOC AND  
REPORTS ON EXCHANGES DURING THE FIRST HALF OF 1957

Note by the Italian Delegation

The following reports deal with cultural exchanges between Italy and the Soviet bloc during the first half of 1957, but do not provide a complete and final answer to the questionnaire prepared by the Committee on Information and Cultural Relations for submission to the various governments.

2. The document does, however, reveal the trend and aims of Italy's policy in respect of countries such as Poland, whose governments have shown less hostility towards the West than others of the Soviet bloc.

3. By reflecting a trend this document may nevertheless be said to fulfil, though incompletely, the main purpose of the questionnaire referred to above.

4. Coming after the Hungarian disturbances of October, 1956, the first half of 1957 was marked, particularly during the early months, by a decline in the cultural contacts between Italy and the Iron Curtain countries.

5. Consequently, since there had been few cultural contacts officially sponsored by the Italian Government and those of the Soviet bloc countries during the preceding six months, it can be asserted that during the period under review, there were none at all.

6. Nevertheless, the fact should not be overlooked that, ranging from relatively sustained relations with Poland to the virtual break with Hungary and the countries with which Italy has no diplomatic relations, certain contacts and exchanges continued in the fields of science, art and general culture which, however sinuous, enabled relations of some kind to be maintained. It was thus possible, towards the end of the year, taking advantage of a slightly more propitious political situation, to resume contacts on a limited scale and to consider the prospects of somewhat more active exchanges in the future.

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7. The criteria which prompted the Italian Government to support or turn down proposals made during the period in question by official bodies or private individuals, were mainly based on an appraisal of the intentions behind the proposals. Those motivated by the desire to foster political propaganda or make converts to Communism under the cover of culture, art or sport were rejected outright. On the other hand, favourable consideration was given to requests for more contacts between Italian and Iron Curtain scientists put forward with a view to profitable exchanges of scientific concepts and information.

8. The Italian Government has made a point of keeping closely under review the relations between the free countries of the West - particularly those which are members of NATO - and the countries of the Soviet bloc. Its intention in so doing is, of course, to find useful guidance for the shaping of its own policy.

#### SOVIET UNION

##### Italian participation in congresses and the like in the USSR

9. It has been decided, in agreement with all NATO member countries, that Italian participation in the International Slavist Congress (Moscow, September, 1958), as well as in the preliminary meetings, one of which was held in Prague last January, shall not have any official character. Italian Slavists will be able to attend in a private capacity.

10. Towards the end of the period under review, the participation of a score of young non-Communist Italians in the "World Festival of Youth" was considered and arranged. These young people advised to adopt a moderately critical attitude within well-defined limits and discreetly to display their preference for Western democracy on every suitable occasion.

11. The results of this arrangement, which was carried out towards the end of last July, will be reported elsewhere.

##### Soviet participation in congresses in Italy

12. No objection was raised to the participation, at the invitation of non-governmental or semi-official bodies, of Soviet delegations, or Soviet scientists acting in a private capacity in the following congresses, meetings of scientists, or other gatherings held in Italy during the first half of 1957:

- Cement Committee of the International Commission on Large Dams (Milan)
- 15th Congress of the National Federation of Communist Youth (Bologna)
- 3rd International Congress of Doctors and Surgeons (Turin)
- 11th National Congress of the Medical-Athletic Federation (Naples)
- International Exhibition of Electronics, Nuclear Physics, Television and the Cinema (Rome)
- 3rd International Conference on Ionisation Phenomena in Gases (Venice)
- Conference on the Astro-physical Aspects of Cosmic-Ray Problems (Ravenna).

Exchanges of Publications, etc.

13. A request from the Soviet Ministry for Culture for an exchange of Italian and Russian publications dealing with patents and meteorological and hydrological statistics was complied with. An article on "Weights and Measures Tables in Italy" has been sent to the Soviet Encyclopaedia at the request of the editors.

Exhibition of Italian drawings

14. An exhibition of Italian drawings previously shown in Leningrad in October, 1956 (work by Casorati, Rosai, Messina, Anna Salvatore, among others) opened in Moscow on 22nd January. The exhibition, which was regarded by the critics as interesting but incomplete, closed on 22nd March to reopen at Riga and Minsk.

Negotiations for a "Soviet Film Week in Italy"

15. During a visit made to the Director-General of Cultural Relations in Rome on 4th June, the Soviet Ambassador proposed, among other things, that the suggestion for a Soviet Film Week in Italy, deferred last year, should now be reconsidered. This proposal, which was accepted in principle, is now being examined. It would follow the lines of the Italian Film Week held some time ago in Moscow.

Music

16. David Oistrach, the well-known Soviet violinist, gave a series of concerts in Italy last May, playing in Rome, Venice, Bologna, Perugia, Milan, Florence, Genoa and Sienna.

17. A series of concerts was given in Moscow and Leningrad last June by an Italian light music orchestra conducted by Nello Segurini.

POLAND

Request by Poland for Cultural Exchanges

18. Poland has on several occasions made proposals aimed at strengthening cultural relations with Italy. These include a proposal to negotiate an agreement on broadcasting and television, a request for texts of representative contemporary Italian plays, requests for documentary films with a cultural, social or sports background, and lastly, a number of requests for various publications.

Polish participation in congresses and the like in Italy

19. Polish specialists attended the following meetings and congresses in Italy:

- Medico-Cardio-Surgical Conference (Turin)
- 3rd International Congress of Doctors and Surgeons (Turin)
- Congress of Hospital Nurses (Rome)
- Children's Festival (Palermo)
- International Contest of Films for Young People (Palermo)
- Methodological Conference on Research in the Field of Substances of Animal Origin (Rome)
- Session of the Federation of Town Planning (Venice)
- 50th General Conference of the International Aeronautical Federation (Palermo)

20. The Polish Library in Rome, which had been virtually closed down, has resumed its activities following the granting of a residence permit to the new Director.

21. During the period under review, many Polish scientists and artists visited Italy to establish contacts with their Italian colleagues and widen their cultural horizon.

Italians in Poland

22. Mr. Luigi Volpicelli, a member of the teaching profession, took part in the Congress on School Reform organized by the Polish Teachers Association.

23. A number of other Italians - scientists, journalists and artists - visited Poland during the period under review, some of them at the invitation of the Polish Government.

24. There were a few isolated instances of Italian participation in Polish sporting events and vice versa.

HUNGARY

Hungarian participation in congresses and the like in Italy

25. During the period under review, a few Hungarian Delegations and Hungarian scientists acting in a private capacity took part in the following congresses and meetings held in Italy:

- 3rd International Congress of Doctors and Surgeons (Turin)
- 3rd International Conference on Ionisation Phenomena in Gases (Venice)
- 22nd International Congress of Typewriting and Stenography (Milan)
- Congress of the International Motorcycle Federation (Venice)
- Meeting of the International Institute of Refrigeration (Padua)
- Conference on Astro-physical Aspects of Cosmic Ray Problems (Ravenna)

Exhibitions of painting in Rome

26. Two painting exhibitions each connected, though differently, with the Hungarian disturbances, were held in Rome. The first, organized by the Italian Association for the Freedom of Culture for the benefit of Hungarian refugee artists, was housed at the "Galleria Nazionale D'Art Moderna" (National Gallery of Modern Art) in Rome. The second, organized by the Syndicate of Artists at the Exhibition Hall in Rome, was a competition-exhibition on the theme: "The Anti-Communist Revolution in Hungary".

The Italian Cultural Institute in Hungary

27. The activities of this Institute, which were suspended after the events of October, 1956, were resumed in January, 1957. People were at first hesitant to go to the Italian Institute, but gradually returned in steadily increasing numbers to the Italian language courses and also availed themselves of the other cultural and artistic facilities offered. Its enrolment list for the academic year 1956/1957 contained 2,319 names, or 518 more than for the preceding year. There was a notable increase in the number of young people enrolled.

Hungarian Academy in Rome

28. Little activity is displayed by this Academy. A wing of the Falconieri Palace, headquarters of the Academy, was taken over by the "Pontificio Istituto Ecclesiastico" after the events of October, 1956, to house Hungarian refugee students. The Pontifical Institute has, however, undertaken to vacate the premises very shortly.

The teaching of Italian in Hungary

29. A Professorship of Italian was set up tentatively at the University of Szeged in February, 1957.

30. Italian was taught in 60 Hungarian schools during the academic year 1956/1957, i.e. 23 more than during the preceding year.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Czech participation in congresses and the like in Italy

31. Czech Delegations, as well as individuals acting in a private capacity, attended the following meetings and congresses held in Italy:

- 50th General Conference of the International Aeronautical Federation (Palermo)
- 3rd International Congress of Doctors and Surgeons (Turin)
- Electronics Congress (Rome)
- 3rd International Congress on Ionisation Phenomena in Gases (Venice)
- Congress of the International Motorcycle Federation (Venice)

Italians in Czechoslovakia

32. The Milan Polytechnic and the University of Rome both sent a few representatives to the ceremonies held last May to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the founding of the Prague Polytechnic.

33. The violinist Gioconda De Vito and the pianist Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli both gave recitals at the International Music Festival held in Prague in May. Their performances were warmly applauded by both the public and the critics.

34. In January and February, 1957, the maestro Antonio Pedrotti conducted the Prague Philharmonic Orchestra in a series of 6 concerts which also met with considerable success.

35. Professor Giovanni Sansone, teacher of mathematics at the "Ulisse Dini" Institute in Florence gave two lectures in Prague in June.

36. Dr. Ludmilla Pederniova, of Prague, gave a series of lectures at Urbino University on Czech art and its relation to Italian art, at the invitation of the university authorities.

37. The Janacek Quartet gave concerts in Turin, Aquila, Messina and other towns during March, 1957.

38. Italo-Czech sports meetings were held both in Italy and Czechoslovakia, but they were very small in number.

39. Italian and Czech athletes took part individually in various contests in both countries.

RUMANIA

Rumanian participation in congresses and the like in Italy

40. Rumanian Delegations and Rumanians acting in a private capacity attended the following meetings in Italy:

- Children's Festival (Palermo)
- 50th General Conference of the International Aeronautical Federation (Palermo)
- 22nd International Congress of Typewriting and Stenography (Milan)

41. An exhibition of Rumanian folk art was held in Rome, Milan and Bologna.

42. Professor Simeon Stailov lectured in Rome at the invitation of the Institute of Higher Mathematics. A lecture on folklore was given by Professor Kihai Pop.

Italians in Rumania

43. A number of Italians took part in the National Congress of Medical Sciences of the Rumanian Peoples' Republic held in Bucharest.

44. Ceremonies marking the 250th anniversary of the birth of Goldoni took place in Bucharest, and a lecture was given by the director of the Bucharest Theatre on this occasion. A performance of "Arlecchino servo de due padroni" (Harlequin at the service of two masters) was organized by the Institute for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries.

45. An exhibition of reproductions of drawings and studies by Leonardo de Vinci was held at the Rumanian Institute in Bucharest under the sponsorship of UNESCO.

46. Contacts between the two countries for sports were few during the period under review.

BULGARIA

Bulgarian participation in congresses and the like in Italy

47. Bulgarians attended the following congresses held in Italy:

- 3rd International Congress of Doctors and Surgeons (Turin)
- 22nd International Congress of Typewriting and Stenography (Milan)

48. A group of Bulgarian technicians visited irrigation and drainage installations and projects at the invitation of the University of Padua.

Italians in Bulgaria

49. Professor Ricardo Picchio, Professor of Russian literature at the University of Florence, visited Bulgaria last May, at the invitation of the University of Sofia and the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. He gave a lecture in Bulgarian on the trend of Slavic studies in Italy and another in Italian on the same subject.



50. Professor Picchio also made some very interesting contacts with Bulgarian men of letters.

51. The 250th anniversary of the birth of Carlo Goldoni, the Venetian writer, was also celebrated in Bulgaria. The reasons which led nearly all the Communist countries to pay special tribute to Goldoni were given special prominence in Bulgaria. At the ceremonies held in Sofia which, it should be noted, were organized by the "Peace Movement", Goldoni was shown as the champion of progressive ideas and the enemy of feudalism, the aristocracy, the Church, Catholic reaction and so forth.

52. At Sofia, a lecture was given by Nicolai Doncev, the writer, followed by the Soviet film "Arlecchino servo de due padroni", based on the play by Goldoni.

#### EAST GERMANY

53. No official cultural exchanges were possible owing to the absence of diplomatic relations between Italy and East Germany.

#### Congresses and Meetings in Italy. Participation of East Germans

54. East Germans participated in a private capacity in the following meetings in Italy:

- Children's Festival (Palermo)
- European Cement Congress (Rome)
- 2nd Congress on Plant Biology (Turin)
- 3rd International Conference on Ionisation Phenomena in Gases (Venice)

55. The Haenschke Quartet from Leipzig gave a few concerts in Italy during February.

56. The "Thomas Mann Centre" was inaugurated in Rome last April. While purporting to be a cultural institute, this Centre is, in fact, intended to be an instrument of Soviet propaganda at the service of the East Berlin Government. Its activities were on a very reduced scale.

#### Italians in Eastern Germany

57. A film directed by Luigi Comencini, "Finestra sul Luna-Park" (Window overlooking Luna-Park), was successfully shown at the Berlin Film Festival, together with English, French, Argentine and other films.

58. The Perugia Opera Company gave successful performances of "Rita", "Don Pasquale" and "Il Campanello" by Donizetti, which were well received by music critics in East Germany.

59. Professor Romolo Ferrari took part in the International Music Congress held in Halle during February, 1957. M. Enrico Bompiani, Professor at Rome University, was present at the ceremonies held in East Berlin to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the birth of Euler.

60. There were virtually no meetings between Italian and East German sports teams, in either country.

#### ALBANIA

61. There were no cultural exchanges during the period under review.

#### CHINESE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC

62. The fact that there are no diplomatic relations between Italy and Communist China quite naturally reduced cultural relations between the two countries to a minimum. It should, however, be said that Italy is watching events in that country with the attention they deserve.

#### Participation of Communist China in congresses and the like in Italy

63. The "Chinese Circus of Peking" toured Italy in January and February.

64. Chinese scientists attended the meetings of the 3rd International Conference on Ionisation Phenomena in Gases held in Venice. Others attended the Children's Festival at Palermo.

#### Italians in China

65. A study team sent by the Italian Institute for the Middle and Far East left Rome on 16th March, 1957, for a month's visit to China. It included Mr. Mariano Imperiali, Secretary General of the Institute, Dr. Albert Giuganino and the Chinese experts Mr. Lionette Lanciotti and Mr. Martin Benedikter.

66. The members of the team have written interesting reports on the results of their mission.

67. A group of Italian film stars directed by Mr. Leonardo Bossi and Mr. Giancarlo Vigorelli started work on a full length film to be called "Il Fiume Giallo" (The Yellow River), during the period under review. The purpose of this documentary film is to give an unbiased, non-political picture of China as it really is, against the background of its ancient civilisation and present day transformation.

68. The Italian Government has been given an assurance that the film will be completely objective.

69. A meeting to arrange exchanges between Italy and China was held in Milan on 8th and 9th June, 1957. It was organized by the "Centro per lo sviluppo delle relazioni con la Cina" (Centre for the Development of Relations with China). The meeting passed a resolution urging an increase in economic, trade and cultural relations between the two countries and the official recognition by Italy of the Chinese Peoples Republic.

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