

REPORT ON SALZBURG SEMINAR ON AMERICAN CIVILIZATION

By Dr. Luigi Meschieri; Rome (Italy)

It is past one month since I left the Salzburg Seminar, and I can better appreciate its value now.

Though my special field (Psychology) was not among the official topics of the lectures I have been very glad to be accepted as I was sure that my knowledge would have been improved anyhow, I was right to think so; as the lectures and seminars of Dr. Mead and Mr. Bryson have been particularly helpful to me. I must thank Dr. Mead for the comprehension she demonstrated of my specific needs, and for the special meetings she held dealing with most recent advancements of American Psychology. I knew her name before going to Salzburg and I have been lucky for having met her and profited of her keep knowledge in all the fields of theoretical and applied Psychology.

My knowledge has been improved also by private conversations or Seminars with Mrs. Ritter, Mrs. Kazin, and in some topics with Miss Ginsberg.

I was sorry to find in the library very few books or reviews dealing with my topics, but anyhow I found some of them very helpful. Those are generally the same ones I had as a gift at the end of the Seminar and which I carried to the Library of Centro di Studio per la Psicologia of the Italian National Research Council.

It would be of the greatest importance that all those scientific contacts started in Salzburg Seminar should last in the following years.

As a way of stimulating the members of the Seminar to do their best I would suggest for next editions the opportunity to print a kind of Scientific Contribution of the Seminar containing the best original papers written by the students during the period.

I have realized that some of the members were not interested in their work as much as was needed. Apart from these exceptions I must witness that the friendly touches arisen among European students must be considered as an important source of knowledge. This was, since the beginning of the war, the first chance I had for a precious exchange of news or judgments on recent achievements in the scientific world.

I tried to give, till now, only the intellectual point of view of my experiences in Salzburg. Those must not be under-evaluated, but my most important experience has been in the emotional field. I had the opportunity to understand and to appreciate many aspects of various civilizations, I had the chance to rate American civilization, which was the most widely presented, compared with many other European ones.

The particular behavior of American teachers has been one of the most shocking experiences I lived. The kind of approach they used towards their students as well as European members was unimaginable for me before the Salzburg experience. After my six years

of University I didn't know what a Seminar was, and I could speak with my teachers only at the examinations. This is the reason why, seeing some aspects of American University life, I get an impressive example, or maybe an ideal to be followed. Since my return to my normal activity I try to apply those examples. This is a modest but positive contribution to the building of Italian democracy. For example, it was hard for me, before, to imagine that a teacher, the lecture over, could thank his pupils; I have learned to do so in Salzburg, and now I am doing so; I feel that my pupils appreciate my behavior. In this way the traditional relation between teacher and pupils is transformed from the medieval dominance-submission relation into a modern fair kind of cooperation.

You can see then that not only what I expected from the Seminar has been satisfied completely, but I have realized many and many things which I could not imagine till now.

Regarding the logistical organization of the Seminar, for instance, I could not imagine that your administration would have been able to supply the members with everything good to reach the most perfect welfare: from cigarettes to aspirin, from books and pencils to home-concerts or parties.

It is hard to imagine a place in Europe better fit than Salzburg; for its geographical position and for its natural beauties. The period during which the Seminar lasted was well chosen, I think to the Festival and to the weather.

I do not think necessary to increase the home amusements: one weekly entertainment (concerts, performances) is enough, if sometimes integrated with social parties as balls, meetings, etc. It is very good to leave free Saturday and Sunday for trips in the surrounding places.

Dealing with the teaching organization it is very difficult for me to propose some change for such a perfect organization. But as I have been questioned about, I would suggest my own point of view.

The subjects treated in the lectures may be considered of three different types: humanistic, technical, informative. In a new edition of the Seminar I think it should be useful to arrange a schedule of this kind:

- 1) Some general information courses (literature, philosophy, history, geography, government: including sociology, economy) 6 hrs.
- 2) Humanistic topics (literature, fine arts, music, philosophy, drama, etc.) 9 hours (and 2 seminars per week for each one)
- 3) Recent developments of technical subjects (Engineering, Medicine, Physics, Chemistry, Economy, Social sciences, Education, etc.) 9 or more hours (Plus 2 seminars per week in each topic)

The character of the lectures should be panoramic for 1); for 2) and 3) monographic. The members should follow 1) and choose in the same hours of the morning, in order not to be overlapped with 1).

The students should have the following characters: carefully chosen, engruated or near to be, teachers (or near to be) or writers, aged 22-30. They should have yet a specific field of action, apply to the Seminar with a defined program of work to be sent before the beginning to the teachers interested. Their age should permit them to assimilate and develop critically the experiences done in the Seminar, in order to put them into action in their own countries, as soon as possible.

Particularly speaking of my country, the proposals of members of Seminars should be done not by official institutes (such as Universities or Government) but by some well known and honest teachers (separatedly) or some elective representatives of students (such as Consigli Studenteschi Interfacolta) in each one of Italian Universities. In order to avoid the danger of personal preferences it seems useful that the final choice should be done by the Secretary of the Seminar, after having received all the documents regarding the perspective applicants; or by a member of the same secretary passing through the various places and interviewing the applicants.

In this way it seems possible to obtain always an homogeneous kind of members, namely those who can better profit by the Seminar and can contribute positively to its achievements.

Speaking of the Teachers and of the American students, I wonder if some better choice should be done: the personalities of some last in my memory and in my heart. Prof. Matthiessen, Dr. Mead, Dr. Kazin, Prof. Leontiev are those by whom I have been particularly shocked. Between American students I have been very glad to meet such friends as Kingsley Erwin, Allen Cooley. Harvard University and whole America must be proud of such ambassadors!

In order to increase the comprehension of American civilization by European minds I think that the presence of teachers born in Europe and living now in America, is particularly useful.

I want to stress also the very important activity of the Secretary, Mr. Heller, Mr. Campbell, Mr. Scott Ellidge demonstrated the highest perfection in their job, from a technical and a human point of view. I wonder for their behavior always kind and up-to-date even while worried with the great difficulties of their task. Their perfect cooperation is one of the reasons of the success of this Seminar; while their work has been a living example of American civilization in action. I doubt if some professionists would be able to undertake such perfect work on social work and educational psychology.

I realized also the very useful presence of American ladies in the field, I would say so, of social case work. Miss Mortimer, and all the wives of teachers were precious in the achievement of welfare, amusements, personal counseling, adjustment to the social life.

In conclusion I recognise the great value of the Salzburg Seminar in the scientific, human and social field. Something will surely be done better in future editions; but the present has been

completely successful. My report cannot be longer and I am obliged to cut off all sentimental memories that the happy stay in Salzburg has given me. I want only to tell of my deep gratitude for each one who has directly or indirectly cooperated in this marvellous achievement, and I hope that I shall be given the opportunity to do something to demonstrate it.

Roma (Italy) October 1st, 1947

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