

Italians in Italy vs. Italians in the World: A New Frontier of Xenophobia?

Fulvio Minichini (December 11, 2008)



A "racist, xenophobic attack" published by an Italian newspaper upsets the over 400 delegates to the First Conference of Young Italians in the World.

The second day of the Conference of Young Italians in the World was monopolized yesterday by a "political incident". The center-right daily "Libero", a newspaper printed in the North of Italy and generally favourable to Mr. Berlusconi's government, devoted its cover page today to a violent attack on the young delegates. The lead article was entitled "Importiamo Papponi" -- a play on words suggesting that the delegates being "imported" from abroad are either "pimps" or "overeaters".

The article was intended to denounce the waste of public money used to cover the expenses of over 400 young people who gathered here from all over the world to meet and discuss a wide range of



issues regarding their life as Italian citizens who are in large part the descendants of Italian emigrants. The Conference - the first ever dedicated specifically to youngsters - is organized along both continental and thematic lines and covers issues such as identity and multiculturalism, information and communication, language and culture, representation and participation, and work.

i-Italy was present at the Conference from day one. We accepted the request of a group of young people who were furious at the newspaper article and demanded a platform to reply with their own words (see the video above). But everybody was upset in the big building of FAO (the UN Food and Agriculture Organization) which hosts the conference. Many despised the fact that some people in Italy today are as racist and xenophobic against today's immigrants as they are against the sons and daughters of our own emigrants.

Below is the English translation of the official document released by the main organizer of the conference, the General Council of Italians Abroad.

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Nowhere in the world but in Italy a national newspaper would have welcomed young citizens coming from all over the world and gathering in Rome for an important Conference, using racist and xenophobic epithets.

The General Council of Italians Abroad - an institution established by Italian law whose mission is mainly carried on by volunteers - is proud for having promoted the First Conference of Young Italians in the World that is taking place in Rome and is subdivided in Continental and Thematic Commissions followed by a final debate in Plenary Assembly.

Both Prodi's and Berlusconi's governments have understood the need to enrich Italy with the treasury represented by young Italians living abroad, whether of first or successive generations, and made possible the organization of this Conference.

The highest representatives of the State, the President of the Republic and the Presidents of the Chamber of Deputies and of the Senate have recognized the importance of the event and welcomed delegates and guests in Montecitorio during an extraordinary meeting of great substantial and symbolic value.

Up until now the works of the conference have highlighted the richness of our young people's analyses and proposals. They are ready to continue to operate as a network, both among themselves and with Italy, aiming to their mutual enrichment on cultural, linguistic, economic, and social planes and to the progressive, positive consolidation of a "System-Italy" abroad.

The Cgie is convinced that this vision, if projected into the future, can contribute to the overcoming of those provincial and ultra-nationalist attitudes that still emerge in some media.

The assembly continues to work on input from the Head of the State and the Presidents of the two branches of the Parliament.

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