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SCHOLARSHIPS TO OTHER COUNTRIES
JAN. 1946

HEADQUARTERS
Education Subcommittee
APO 394

D/CW/CC

ED/92/4.22/46

25 January, 1946

SUBJECT : Education of Teachers
in Italy.

TO : Mrs. Anita Mc Cormick Blaine
101 E Erie Street,
Chicago, Illinois.

Dear A. B.:

How are you, my dear? I assume that you have been getting copies of my letters to "family, faculty and friends" and therefore know all about my doings. If by any chance you have not been getting these letters, and you want to see them, ask your secretary to telephone my secretary, Jessie Knox, at Lincolnton 858, and ask her to send them to you.

In this devastated land the need for help of all kinds is so great that no one can do more than one bit. My bit has been to try to get the schools running on a non-fascist basis, and then to help the Italians institute a more modern program of education. One of the best jobs has been done on the new course of study for elementary schools - by far the most important part of the educational system, since 85 percent of Italy's children never go beyond the five-grade elementary school. You and Miss Cooke, and Col. Parker if he were living, would be much cheered if you could see how many of the ideas to which you have dedicated your lives are included in this new, national program for elementary schools.

Our next problem was to improve the teacher-training schools so that they could prepare the elementary school teachers. The so-called teacher-training schools under fascism had no courses in education or psychology except a dry history of pedagogy, and a nod at the history of psychology. Nor did they have any practice teaching. Our new programs for the normal schools are at least a lot better - they include education and psychology and practice teaching; but we could not make them as good as they should be because the normal school teachers have had no preparation in educational theory and practice.

Finally, Mussolini's first Minister of Education, abolished most courses in education and psychology from the universities over twenty years ago; and he forbade professors to attend international educational meetings - I remember that at the New Education Fellowship meetings in Torino (1927), Nice (1932) and Cheltenham (1936), attend-

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ed by scientists from fifty or sixty nations, Italy was not represented. So there are no university professors equipped to prepare normal school teachers to train elementary teachers.

To start to remedy this situation I have just been to Switzerland with Prof. Guido de Ruggiero. De Ruggiero is a great scholar - a philosopher - about to go to Oxford to lecture and receive an honorary D.D. He was Minister of Public Instruction in 1942 and organized the commission which prepared the new program for elementary schools. Now he is head of the Superior Council which coordinates the work of all universities in Italy. On the trip to Switzerland he was the official representative of the present Minister of Public Instruction, Miele.

We and I went to see Prof. Jean Piaget, Director of the Bureau International d'Education and also Director of the Jean Jacques Rousseau Institute of the University of Geneva. Piaget, as you probably know, is Europe's greatest authority on child psychology. With Piaget we discussed the possibility of sending one or two potent, young professors from each of the six or seven leading universities of Italy to Geneva for two semesters of special training. Piaget suggested that each be assigned to a research problem in child psychology so that they could get the feel of modern methods of approaching education; and that they take carefully selected courses in experimental education and child psychology and do guided reading in modern educational methods and major movements in psychology.

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With this background, they can come back to Italy, give special lectures and seminars for the other university professors and begin training normal school teachers.

The Italian Minister, and especially Prof. De Ruggiero, are strongly in favor of this and will do all they can to promote the plan. But there is one hitch: The Italian Government is so poor that it would be difficult in the face of the overwhelming physical and economic needs of the country to finance this project; and Italy has no Swiss exchange - Italian lire have no international standing and will not buy Swiss francs, except at preposterous prices on the black market.

This is where you come in. Will you, U.S., finance the project? It will only cost 6,000 dollars - an absolutely small sum in proportion to the ~~in~~ ^{one} good it will do. For this little money we can train six professors, who, returning to Italy, will train many more. These in turn will train the normal school teachers who can then prepare all the elementary teachers of Italy to carry out the new and progressive educational program - a program which is now written into the law of the land, but needs to be written into the minds and hearts of the teachers.

You, who founded the University Institute, the Francis Parker School, and the School of Education at the University of Chicago, who

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have helped countless people to see the values of a real education and to prepare themselves to educate the coming generations, can crown your life's work by helping one of the worst devastated countries in the world, the country whose lack of sound education precipitated fascism and stimulated nazism, with all the ghastly tragedy that followed - you can help this country to set the pace for a new education in Europe.

Darling, I've wanted a hundred times since I got over here to call to you for help where help was needed. But until now I've remained - none of the other things seemed to me to fit clearly into the pattern of the kind of help you love to give. But this project, yielding results out of all proportion to the investment, is so precisely in line with your interest and life work that I could hardly wait to get back to Italy to write to you about it.

Please cable me, care the American Embassy, Rome, telling me that you will give 6,000 dollars for this vitally important work. (Of course, if you want to give more we can prepare more professors - it will cost 1,000 dollars for each. I've suggested the minimum that would be effective).

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The reasons for selecting Piaget and the Jean Jacques Rousseau Institute are several: (1) Piaget is Europe's greatest child psychologist and the Jean Jacques Rousseau Institute the best center in Europe for this work; (2) Most Italian professors know French well, while few know English; (3) The European approach will be easier for Italians to understand than would be the American or British approach to education; (4) the Jean Jacques Rousseau Institute is small enough to give special personal attention to this project and to each professor's needs; (5) the cost is about half as great and would be that of sending the professors to the United States for training.

The money would be sent to the Jean Jacques Rousseau Institute for this purpose - not to Italy; because it will be needed in Swiss francs, and if sent to Italy the dollars would be converted into lire. The Italian Government will of course pay the expenses to Switzerland, and in Switzerland your francs will pay for the living expenses, books and tuition.

Will you do it, A. E.?

Just a personal word before I close. I probably shall be staying on in Italy as Science and Education Officer in the American Embassy. The Education Subcommission is about to go out of

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existence ; but in this new post I would be able to carry forward the work I have started. I met Helvis in Switzerland and brought her back to Rome with me; so I'm glad to stay on. Only I hope I can get a leave in the summer to see my children and my four grandchildren (two of whom I've never seen) and my friends, including you!

Much love to you, dear,

GARRETTON W. WASHBURN
Lt. Col., A. U. S.
Director of Education

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