



Volume 8. Occupation and the Emergence of Two States, 1945-1961

“Worker Treaty Rome – Bonn Signed,” *Frankfurter Rundschau* (December 21, 1955)

In the mid-1950s, the booming German economy was no longer able to meet its need for workers, despite the stream of refugees from East Germany and the growing number of women in the workforce. At the end of 1955, West Germany and Italy signed the first in a series of treaties to recruit Italian workers for the German labor market; the treaty was intended to bring 100,000 Italians to Germany within a year as so-called “guest workers.”

---

### **Worker Treaty Rome – Bonn Signed**

*Number of Italian workers not limited*

*Wire report from our Italy correspondent Hans Bauer*

Rome, December 20. With the signing [of the treaty] by Foreign Minister Martino and Labor Minister Storch on Tuesday in Rome, the Italian-German treaty on the recruitment of Italian workers for the Federal Republic has taken effect. In contrast to similar conventions in existence between Italy and other countries, the recruitment falls within the purview of the Italian Ministry of Labor, to which the Federal Office on the German side will report its needs. The recruits will be directed to an emigration center that has been set up in Milan, where a German-Italian commission will review their suitability. With respect to pay and social benefits, the Italian workers will be equal, in principle, to German workers. Workers with a year-long contract can also have their families join them, provided that their housing has been arranged, or they can remit their wages, up to the full amount, to Italy.

### **Storch Wants “Much, Much More”**

In an interview with the newspaper *Giornale d'Italia*, Storch explained that no fixed quota for Italian workers was set in the agreement, because the Federal Republic wants to take in as many as possible. Currently, more than 50,000 Italians are working in the Federal Republic, but he is hoping that there will be “many, many more” by the end of next year. On Monday afternoon, Storch had a meeting with Foreign Minister Brentano, who – as Storch said – supported the new treaty wholeheartedly.

### **SPD: Permanent Unemployment along the Zonal Border**

Bonn (personal report). At the conclusion of the German-Italian treaty, a speaker for the opposition declared that the SPD affirms freedom of movement in principle. However, he

reminded the audience emphatically of the high level of permanent unemployment in the zonal border regions. The SPD expects that the federal government will bring these jobless to the industrial centers while significantly boosting the construction of affordable housing.

### **Federal Labor Minister Responds**

In a letter to the SPD parliamentary group, Minister Storch explained at the same time, in response to an inquiry, that equal wages and equal working conditions had to be guaranteed in the interest of the German and foreign workers. Only then would it be possible to prevent an adverse effect on the German wage and collective bargaining structure.

### **“Only small labor reserves”**

On Tuesday, before the federal press conference, State Secretary Sauerborn from the Federal Labor Ministry justified the signing of the treaty by saying that recourse to foreign workers could no longer be avoided in 1956. Last year, he said, the employment number had been increased by around one million. In the future, however, one could no longer expect such a favorable result, since there are only fairly small reserves left among the unemployed.

Source: Hans Bauer, “Arbeitervertrag Rom – Bonn unterzeichnet” [“Worker Treaty Rome – Bonn Signed”], *Frankfurter Rundschau*, December 21, 1955, p. 1.

Translation: Thomas Dunlap