

# OGGI

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**THE BIG STORIES ONLY «OGGI» CAN BRING YOU:  
VITTORIO AND MARINA CONFESS! IT'S THE FIRST TIME.**

**«Before the winter's over», the Prince told us, «Marina and I will have reached a definitive decision» – «Whatever happens it will be enough for my father to know that I am happy» – «Marry a princess? I've never given it a thought» – «I sincerely hope my sisters will let their hearts decide for them» – «I know it won't be long before my parents are living together again.»**

Interview by  
**SERGIO LOCATELLI**

*Merlinge (Switzerland), July*

«Dominique Claudel? Oh, no! Absolutely out of the question. I never said I intended to marry her. She's a good friend and that's all there is to it.»

«But, Your Highness, it has been said, as well as written, that your family...»

«Well, whatever's been said and written simply isn't true. There was never any family council called to discuss the matter, neither in regard to little Dominique Claudel, nor any other girl. And if you want the truth, I didn't leave Dominique. She was the one who dumped me. I'd gone off to the States for six months and when I got back I found her going out with somebody else.»

We were seated in the splendid Château of Merlinge. Back from one of his many business trips, Vittorio Emanuele had consented to receive us and talk about himself, his past and his plans for the future. He is blond, taller than he looks in photographs, and couldn't be more friendly. Beside him (the three of us had been talking for over two hours) sat a beautiful girl with intense eyes – Marina Doria.

Vittorio had granted us the most sincere and searching interview he had ever consented to. He had decided to emerge from his reserve and speak out about everything and everyone, once and for all, to put a stop to the rumours and gossip that have been making life hard for him of late.

It may seem strange, but for some time now the resentment of quite a number of people seems to have concentrated on this young man of 26 with his mild simplicity and open gaze. He has been under fire from criticisms and demands for “explanations” about anything he does. Some have written him insulting letters, anonymous of course. Vittorio is quite conscious of the fact that he is not only a royal prince but also a “man in the news”. He never challenges the criticisms, nor does he bear resentment towards his critics. If he has made up his mind to speak out now it is only because the attacks are not only aimed at himself. They also strike at Marina Doria, the girl the prince has considered himself engaged to for the last two years, and who will in all probability, before the end of 1963 and at the latest early in 1964, become a Savoy.

## **A DELIGHTFUL GIRL**

Marina Doria smiles. She gazes at her “Victor”, as she affectionately calls the prince with a look half tender and half protective. It’s obvious she is grateful to him and after so much tattle and gossip, happy to be conscious of his strong-armed support. She now breaks into the conversation.

«It’s perfectly true. It’s exactly as Victor says. I began going out with him when his heart was already free, so I wasn’t cutting in on anybody else.

«The first time Victor and I met was just after the war, in 1948, at Crans sur Sierre, in the Vaud. From that moment on we became the greatest of friends until about two years ago we realized that, right through the last five or six months, we’d been going out together almost every day.»

Marina Doria is 28, two years older than Vittorio. She has a good head on her shoulders and here in Geneva they say that ever since she became his inseparable companion, there has been a complete change in the prince. Before coming on to Merlinge we were her guests in Geneva, where Marina lives with her parents in a modern villa on the lake. Courteous, friendly and simple, this young woman had much to tell us about her position in regard to the Italian prince and the royal family.

Granddaughter of a Genoan marquis who renounced his title when acquiring Swiss nationality, and daughter of the Chairman of the board of directors of a number of important companies, Marina has an innate refinement and outgoing friendliness. She is the eldest (and prettiest) of three sisters.

«Signorina, do you find it at all irksome being the girl, and probably the future bride, of the heir to the throne of Italy?»

## **«MY MOTHER KNOWS ALREADY»**

«Not in the least. We have taken lots of trips together, in the United States, Central and South America, Africa. I’ve had the chance of meeting lots of people, but never, for one moment, have I felt as happy as I feel today. Besides Victor is in the same situation and he won’t mind admitting it.»

There has certainly been a change in Vittorio Emanuele ever since he has got to know Marina Doria. A certain touchiness and impetuosity have subsided. We ask the Prince his intentions towards to this girl. Whether he has spoken to his parents about her and whether, before or after getting to know her, he had ever considered the idea of marrying a princess.

«Before the end of 1963 we shall have come to a decision. Either make a clean break or else get married. I am now 26 years old and I have given the matter careful thought lately. In a few months time I shall speak to my father. Till now I have said nothing to him about Marina, nor about my feelings for her. But I am quite sure that on the day I do his answer will be: «If this means your future happiness, then go ahead.»

«My mother already knows. As I live with her there is no difficulty about discussing my problems and telling her what I intend to do. And then, Marina has often been our guest in Merlinge, lunched with us, she's been a close friend of my sisters.

Mother knows Marina. On the whole she agrees. She isn't against it, and I feel sure she approves.

«Besides, I think I can say that the ultimate decision will rest with myself, alone. I have always listened to my father's advice, and shall continue to do so. But the decision to marry is one which a man must make for himself for the sake of everyone's happiness.»

«As to the possibility of marrying a princess, it's something I've never even bothered to think about. I have met a lot of them but never found one who has really charmed me. Just between ourselves I must say very few of them are really beautiful. I'm joking of course, but what I really think is that in this day and age it would be absurd, for me or anyone else, to marry a woman simply because she is a princess.»

We asked Vittorio Emanuele if he felt this "progressive" view of royal marriages applied to his sisters. There has been much controversy on this question; in fact Maria Gabriella has been "accused" of holding ideas on the same lines as Vittorio.

«The best things my sisters can do is to marry the man they are in love with, whether he is a prince or not».

«While we are on the subject, there's something I've always wondered about. Is there any truth in that story, a while ago, about the Shah of Persia proposing marriage to Maria Gabriella?»

«I know nothing about it. In any case I think the difference in religion would be the real cause of the refusal.»

We asked the prince to tell us, once and for all, what really happened in his famous accident in 1962, where he nearly lost his life with Marina, the time his car crashed into a tree just outside Lausanne.

«First of all I want to make it perfectly clear - not by way of excuse but simply to state the facts - that I was not drunk, as some people have made out. I had had half a glass of whisky and was driving from Geneva to Lausanne with Marina. We were to meet up with some friends of ours who were leaving Switzerland for good. Just before getting into Lausanne, the surface of the road was less than perfect and it was raining and my car skidded and ended up against a tree. I was going at 70, maybe 80, kilometres an hour, certainly no faster than that.»

«The consequences of the accident were rather serious. After a few days in hospital in Lausanne I had to go to Paris for a complicated operation on my knee, which was perfectly successful. Marina had some problems at first, but luckily she has made a complete recovery. She is quite well now, walks almost normally and very soon, this summer probably, she can start water-skiing again.

While we were on the subject we decided to clear up two other unpleasant "rumours" about Vittorio Emanuele, which have been doing the rounds. «Was there any truth», we asked him, «about your romance with a very young American girl, Nicole Le

Vien, whom you met on the Côte d'Azur in 1959 and saw again in America at the end of 1960? And what was the story about Antea Nocera's attempted suicide, when she threw herself out the window because of you (at least that's what the papers wrote at the time).

«There was no such thing as a romantic episode with Nicole Le Vien. All it was, was a publicity stunt engineered by the Americans. The day I left for Italy I found a crowd of news photographers at the airport that somebody or other had arranged to be there. Nicole and her father were with me; they took pictures of the three of us together and the next day I read in the papers that I was in love with little Nicole while Dominique Claudel was eating her heart out in Geneva. Pure fiction.

«As for Antea Nocera I want to make it quite clear that there is absolutely no truth at all in the story of her «suicide» over me. I had met her in Geneva and only saw her again once. When the incident occurred I had been in Cannes with Marina for at least a fortnight. I've still never understood whether Antea declared she threw herself out window because of me, or whether someone else invented the whole thing. In any case my name was dragged into it without the slightest justification.

## **THE RIGHTS OF SUCCESSION**

The prince made no hesitation in answering. Marina Doria listened and from time to time nodded in agreement. For ten years this young man has been travelling the world. Unlike what has sometimes been written he is seriously at work creating a solid position for himself in the world of business. His familiarity with different kinds of people and knowledge of different environments has made a resolute young man of Vittorio Emanuele. Using a cliché, perhaps, though it gives us a pretty good idea of his outlook on life, we would be inclined to say that this young Savoy prince thinks and speaks in the way of Americans; that is, he speaks his mind and unhesitatingly assumes responsibility for his actions.»

We said, «One reads that your father is not always happy with you. In fact he has decided to contact young Amedeo of Aosta to discuss the problem of the succession to the throne.»

«My father has never consulted Amedeo of Aosta. Or anyone else for that matter. There isn't a word of truth in what you've read. Any more than it's true to say that by marrying Marina Doria, or any girl not of royal blood, I would lose my rights to the succession.»

The question of the succession and its institutional implications: these are two topics that have always been taboo for Vittorio Emanuele of Savoy. Until today. We tackle it without mincing words, and suddenly the interview changes tack. The prince weighs his words before answering. From the end of the war till today this is the first time a member of the House of Savoy has spoken so clearly on questions as delicate as this.

«Your Highness? What do you think of the chances for a restoration of the monarchy in Italy?»

«We must face facts. A restoration of the monarchy is practically impossible in Italy. There may of course be ample historical justification for a Scandinavian type monarchy, and it would probably benefit the country. As far as I am concerned I would return to Italy only if I felt quite sure I could help all the people, without distinction, and that I could support the development of the country.

«However the world goes on turning. Today my real ambition is to establish myself in the world of commerce, the stock exchange, and become a specialist. I love my work. I decided on it after gaining a good deal of experience, and with a certain amount of success. I sit in my office from nine till noon and from two till six in the afternoon. My salary is 250 thousand lire a month, not the millions one reads about.

«I do quite a bit of travelling but I try not to be away too long when work is piling up. Recently I've been in the United States, where "Bache", the American company I work for in Geneva, sends its collaborators from time to time. It has been a truly interesting experience, and given me the chance to come into contact with the great stock exchange on Wall Street.

We asked the prince if it is true that Umberto's decisions have been influenced by Maria Pia and some Italian monarchists.

«I am perfectly certain they are not. My father never allows himself to be influenced by Maria Pia or anyone else. Advice he accepts from everybody, but the decisions he makes himself.»

«Over the last years, your mother and father have been living separated, at considerable distance. Do you find this situation has influenced the development of your character? Has it been painful for you?»

«Of course. It is painful for all children whose parents are no longer living together. However I'm sure that before very long the day will come when they'll be together again. There are many reasons for their separation but my sisters and I have great hopes that the day of their reunion won't be too far off.»

The young prince's face clouded. We changed the subject and asked Vittorio what he thinks about Italian politics.

«I follow Italian politics as much as I follow international politics. As far as the Monarchical Party is concerned, in my opinion they are passing through an extremely serious crisis. Probably they should have dissolved straight after the referendum, when my father left for Portugal. The main upholders of the kingdom disappeared. They were no longer in Italy. In my modest opinion that's when votes were lost, and even more so today.»

## **I WOULD LIKE TO LIVE IN NAPLES**

In everything the young Savoy prince tells us his nostalgia for Italy shows through.

«I would like to live in Naples. It's a city I'm very attached to (I'm Neapolitan myself) although I don't remember too much about it. The last time I was there I was nine years old. But I'd also like to live in other Italian cities. Even today I still feel very touched when I remember something that happened in 1962 when I was flying back to Europe from Africa. The plane made a stop-over at Fiumicino. As you know I

cannot enter Italian territory. So I had to stay on board, and I can't tell you just how friendly and caring the airport staff were towards me on that occasion.»

We asked the prince how he keeps up with everything going on in Italy.

«By reading the newspapers thoroughly every day. I'm a great admirer of Indro Montanelli, and I also follow literary events.

Croce is my passion among the "classics". I also follow what is happening with the trade unions and the economy. I take a pile of specialized bulletins. I'm very interested in problems of the workers. When I was working in Washington, in an aeroplane industry, my best friends were workers. I often went out with them and talked things over. That was how I became so interested in industrial problems and the unions.»

The interview with Vittorio Emanuele and Marina Doria is over. The two young people have spoken calmly, now and then exchanging glances and prompting each other. He brimming with enthusiasm, she much quieter. We couldn't help sharing the opinion of their friends that they seemed to complement each other. We might even bet that by the end of the year, when Vittorio announces his decision, Marina will be a girl greatly envied by many princesses.

*Sergio Locatelli*