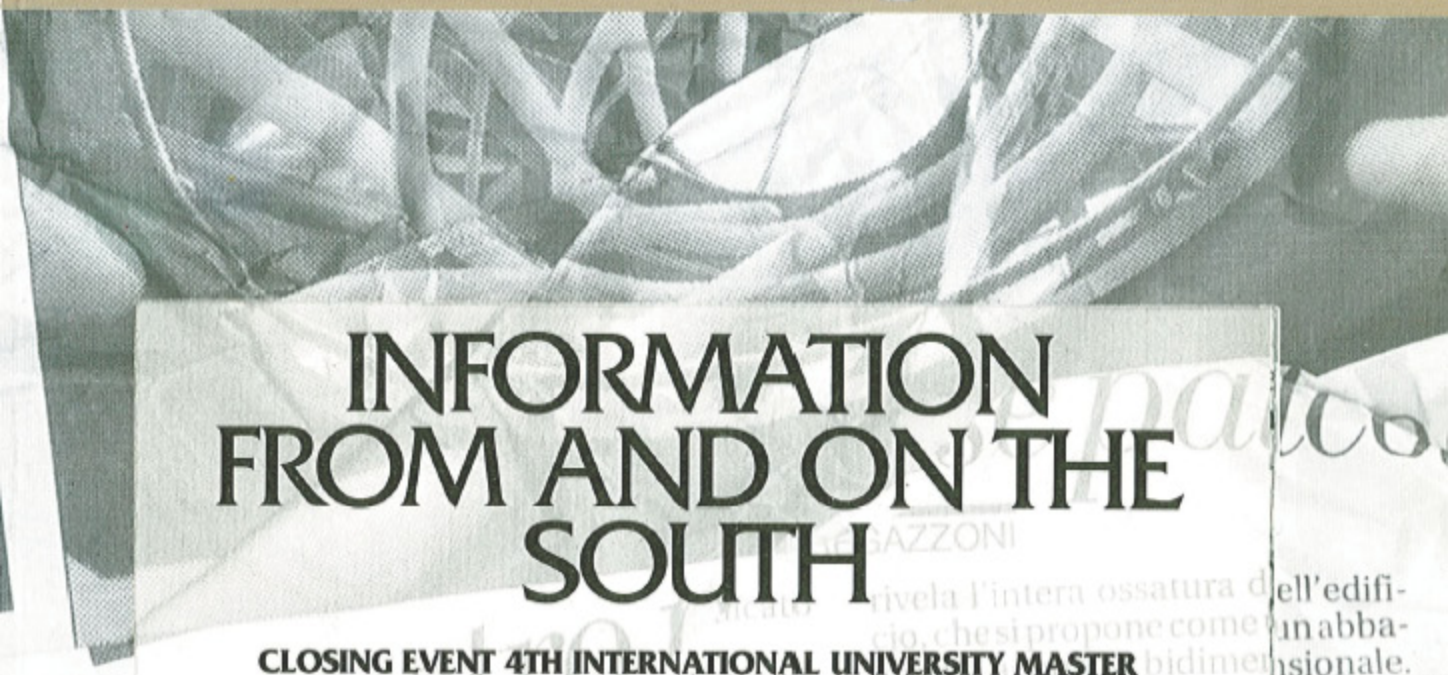
IUSS

The European School of Advanced Studies in Cooperation and Development



INFORMATION FROM AND ON THE SOUTH

CLOSING EVENT 4TH INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY MASTER IN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

CISP COMITATO INTERNAZIONALE PER LO SVILUPPO DEI POPOLI

COOPI

VIS

14th june 2001
St.Caterina college, Pavia

Roundtable
Organized by PIROGA

in collaboration with
International Solidarity, University of Pavia,
CISP, UNA and VIS

Information from and on the south

Closing event
4th International Universytary Master
in Development Cooperation

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Anna Rocchi and Marco Massoni

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FINALLY, a special thanks to Francesca Montagna, organisational secretary of the Master and to Valery Ivanka Dante [CISP] for the event organisation and editing.

Preface

ANNA ROCCHI

A ROUNDTABLE ON «Information from the South and on the South» was held in Pavia on June the 14th. The roundtable was organised on the occasion of the end of the 4th International University Master on Development Cooperation. The meeting was aimed at highlighting the various ways adopted by mass media when providing information and identifying the recurrent issues dealt with by mass media when describing the South of the world. The objective of the meeting was also to illustrate both the main issues associated to the information identification and transmission process, and the possible alternative solutions and procedures.

THE AIM OF THE ROUNDTABLE –which was the last activity of the Master – was that of increasing awareness on the role played by individual and collective representations of what is «far away» and/or «alien» [i.e. representations of individuals, societies and dynamics of the South of the world] generated by mass media in their daily relationship with the reality of other countries. Specifically, the aim was to highlight the role of the media in maintaining and sometimes strengthening some specific representations of the South of the world.

The roundtable was focused on two specific topics:
- examples of images and information on different topics, subjects, and means with a specific view to some objective difficulties of the context dealt with;

– presentation of alternative modes and approaches to disseminate information, with a specific view to the objectives pursued by these processes.

WITH RESPECT TO THIS POINT, Toni Fontana illustrated the difficulties encountered by mass media in providing a correct representation of Africa; Massimo Ghirelli analysed the stereotyped image of the South of the world, making some remarks on the TV commercial «L'uomo del monte»; Renata Pisu talked about the role of the special correspondent and of the correspondent from abroad and how this role has been changing over time; Raffaello Zordan made some remarks on the issue of the Great Lakes and on the mandate of the monthly magazine Nigrizia; Sandro Lafranconi illustrated the story of the missionary press agency MISNA and talked about the complexity of the procedures to disseminate different information; Nicola Perone highlights the characteristics and contradictions of the way to report on the South of the world by Italian mass media.

FINALLY, the presentation of the «Piroga project», which foresees not only the realisation of a magazine, but also some ad hoc activities to support its widespreading, and it highlights the great potential deriving from the collaboration between people working in the international collaboration and journalist in information production.

ROME, SEPTEMBER 2001

Information from and to the south

ENRICO MAGENES
President of S.Caterina College

I SEIZE THIS OPPORTUNITY PROVIDED by the conclusion of the 4th course on Cooperation for Development to welcome and give my best wishes to all of you who, after this course, will enter the labour market. I would like to remind that the Master on Development Cooperation was the first Master held within a College and started as soon as we entered into the agreement with the Minister for Foreign Affairs in 1997. The Master started in the early months of 1998, also thanks to the support provided by the NGOs, and by the many friends involved. Everything can always be improved and also thanks to your constant suggestions we will be able to fill some gaps and achieve optimal results, results which are already satisfactory. The internship which finalises your course is a specific characteristic of this master and a major opportunity to make a preliminary experience prior to making a final professional choice. To give more time to the various speakers I would like to conclude by saying that the curricula studied and developed within the IUSS are viewed as an example and are replicated not only in Italy but also in other countries. In fact IUSS was asked to set up in Costarica a «School of Media Sciences and Technologies» similar to our School. Few days ago in Tunis an agreement was entered into which provides for the establishment in this city of a Mediterranean School of Advanced Studies in Media Sciences and Technologies, as a first point of a Mediterranean network of schools of advanced studies connected to the Italian schools. This is a very important point, it is the result of a successful initiative. A success for which we have to thank all those who have conceived this initiative, the professors who have supported it and all of you who have proven that the initiative was good and worth of support and replication. I thank all of you for your

support and I give you my best wishes for your future work. Lastly, I would like to thank the guests who have participated in this roundtable which concludes this fourth cycle of the School of Cooperation for Development.

GIANNI VAGGI
Professor and director of the European Schoool of advanced Studies on Cooperation and Development

I AM REALLY PLEASED that the 4th course in Development Cooperation concludes with this roundtable on the role played by mass media in education for development. Today we have with us some experts who work in the communication sector with high competence and professionalism. But there is also another reason which makes the conclusion of this course a significant event.

At the beginning of the course eight months ago we stressed the complexity of the development phenomenon, or the complexity associated to the non-development; this complexity is even higher when we want to implement cooperation measures. Understanding different realities which are far away from our reality from the geographical, cultural and historic standpoint is crucial if we want to intervene. However, understanding these different contexts is difficult. Everyday I realise that as you probe into the study of development and as the level of your experience increases, your certainties decline.

The role of communication and mass media is crucial to help all of us [TV users, newspaper readers] to cope with this complexity and these difficulties. Sometimes an image or a brief newspaper article can give us much more than an academic text. But I think that the media friends who are today with us have another privilege/opportunity, i.e. they are for us «the others' eyes». They show us a world [we are not very familiar with] through reports made by those who look at us from the outside. If to share this world each of us must be able to play with «the others' eyes», trying and understanding different points of view, then the channels used for these views are very powerful and delicate tools. The journalists who are with us today hold in their hands, and I think that they are well aware of this, a

huge power and responsibility. I wish to thank each one of them for their professional activity and for performing their role; I am pleased that they can transfer to us a little bit of their experience.

St. Caterina College, represented here by its President Professor Magenes, provides a crucial logistic support and not only to the School. Through him, I would also like to extend my thanks to the Rector of the College, Prof. Musatti.

I would like to thank the University of Pavia and the Directorate General charged with Cooperation for Development of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs which strongly supported us.

Lastly I would like to thank all friends of the NGOs; their support is crucial for the success of the School; our relationship with them provides us with an useful exchange of experiences and partnership which helps us to understand and intervene in favour of development.

The Africa

and the difficulties of an objective presentation through newspapers

TONI FONTANA

IT IS SURELY HARD TO DEFINE THE «reportability» of news from the South of the planet when we analyse the way in which these news are covered by mass media. In the past years of my professional life I dealt with Balkans and Middle East, but above all with Africa, for which I developed a sort of passion, although I do not have the same experience accrued by the other speakers participating in this roundtable. I followed some events, also dramatic ones, including the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. In these days I read again an article written by professor Giampaolo Calchi Novati, a well known expert of Africa and professor at the University of Pavia, published in a collection of articles written by African journalists, presented in Rome by the Press Association. In this article the author maintains that Africa should come out of the conical-shaped shadow where it usually lies. Calchi Novati maintains that the blame should be thrown on international media, newspapers and televisions, as they provide only occasional and accidental information on Africa; in his opinion journalists report on Africa only in case of extraordinary or exceptional events. I basically agree with Calchi Novati's opinion, although his scholar's perspective prevails as he is not familiar with the mechanisms of the media and the difficulties of placing news from the South of the world. I would like to start my presentation providing you with some data, already known by most of you, drawn from the UNDP [United Nations Development Programme] report of the year 2000. I have with me an interesting table illustrating the state of the art of the human development index with respect to life expectancy and life standard in general. With respect to these parameters the table clearly shows that, out of 174 countries, the last 22 – the poorest countries – are all African countries. When analysing the allo-

cation of technologies, it is immediately clear that dissemination of the Internet in the South of the world is negligible as compared to wealth countries. For example, the United States – with 4.7% of the world population – account for 26.3% of users of the Internet, while sub – Sahara Africa – with 9.7% of the world population – accounts for 0.1% of the Internet users. To my opinion both the Internet and other assets – including press, diffusion and power of mass media – are proportional to the wealth of these Countries. The world division of the ownership of the information means is proportional to the data mentioned above.

The main tool to report news to newspapers, radio and to the mass media system, is represented by press agencies. It is obvious that richer countries, as such, have a stronger power to follow the events based upon their interests. For instance, in Africa, France Press, which is the official French press agency, is clearly rooted in French-speaking countries. Usually French-speaking Africa is followed by France Press in an exclusive and detailed manner, while English-speaking agencies, such as Reuters or Associated Press [AP], are obviously focused on English-speaking Countries. What was once the colonial sub-division of the African continent has still an impact on the geo-political and strategic interest of these Countries. I would like to mention my personal experience: when I was in Rwanda, in 1994, France Press followed Rwanda events with a greater interest as compared to other press agencies, also when French people intervened with the Foreign Legion in the region of the Big Lakes. Nevertheless, a battle between Tutsi forces – which were perpetrating a genocide – and French troops was not deliberately reported by France Press, as it was not in the interest of the French government to report it. The only press agency which reported the news was a German agency. However we have to give to France Press the merit of largely covering all events related to the region of the Big Lakes during the 1990s. France Press has not instead properly covered the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea, once again because of the poor interest of Paris in that area.

With regard to Africa, we often have to deal with FrancePress/Ansa agencies; this means that the Italian agency Ansa, having decided not to follow a given event directly, relies on the translation of the French agency. The fact that the American president Bush has decided to call together for the early days of October of this year all African heads of government is surely an important news. The information flow reaching the West World is given by the reports of the correspondents but even more by the flow of information reaching the editorial office, the large industries and the ministries: these are the terminal of the news. Without all this we would not know what is happening in the rest of the world. Associated Press launched a 35 lines piece of news to illustrate G. Bush's initiative; E. Biscom, an Italian agency which reproduces Associated Press, cut to 15 lines the Italian edition of the same news, thus drastically reducing the agency content. Another example: France Press writes in French language from Mogadiscio [Somalia], a former Italian colony, while Ansa does not operate from there, forcing us to resort to the French news. With

regard to the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict, Ansa writes from Nairobi [Kenya] and not from Addis Abeba or Asmara. Synthetically it can be stated that there is a kind of breaking down by geo-political interests: For example France takes care and defends, also from the military standpoint, its own interests in Africa and, consequently, it defends the presence of its information sensors. This implies, for instance, that two years ago in Kinshasa [Democratic Republic of Congo] an aircraft crashed down on a market, killing hundreds of people. In those days I was in Rome in my office and I had to write an article only based upon the news provided by press agencies, because I could not fly to Congo's capital city. Well, I could not write more than 30 or 40 lines just because there were no information available. In fact no agency had followed that event and nobody even came to know the actual number of victims resulting from that accident. I think that in case of a tornado in Florida, all newspapers would have dealt with this news for many days as they could get a constant flow of detailed news, something that does not happen with the African countries, already cut out of the globalisation, where also local information are very poor and controlled by the regimes.

In particular I suggest to read the report on press freedom in Africa, Africa a caccia di giornalisti [Africa hunting for journalists], by Pino Rea, from which we can clearly infer that some events «do not exist» because they are not covered by the mass media system. In Italy there is only one Press agency, Ansa, a co-operative paid by all Italian newspapers which, actually, follows the directives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Ansa is there, where there are some specific interests, In Africa there are only three seats of Ansa: Cairo, South Africa [Johannesburg or Cape Town depending on the period] and Nairobi. The information flow is poor and fragmented and Italian interests are always limited also as former colonial power. Not even the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia and Eritrea in particular, arouse the curiosity of the Italian press. This despite of the fact that one of the main authors of the peace treaty between Ethiopia and Eritrea signed in Algiers last year is Italian, namely Senator Rino Serri, under-secretary of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs with delegation for Africa and mediator on behalf of the European Union. There are instead many aspects which would justify an accurate coverage of the events occurring in the Horn of Africa: strategic impacts resulting from the neighbouring country [Sudan], problems associated to Islamic fundamentalism, routes of the Red Sea, sale of Italian weapons in the area

I went to Ethiopia for the first time in 1995 because of the kidnapping of nine Italian tourists who had been seized by a band of bandits in the region named Dancalia. In those days all the Italian press was based in the hotels of Addis Abeba; we wrote real novels on the epic of the kidnapping of the Italian tourists in the Dancalia depression; then, once the tourists were released, we found out that that the girls of the Italian group had fallen in love with the leader of the bandits, while another member of the Italian group, through a hidden camera, had made a film

that he sold at a high price when back to Italy. I flied back to Ethiopia in 1998 and 1999 to write about the war, and, paradoxically, it was very difficult for me to write even 70-80 lines because I had the feeling to be writing about distant events, of no interest to the Italian public and press.

The war in Mozambique: 17 years of conflict, one million people dead. There were also the units of the Italian Alpine troops and a colleague of mine found by chance that they had the typical white feather on the UNO blue helmet [something not well accepted by the United Nations]. Well, all newspapers devoted their attention to this news only. That seemed to be the only news worth of reporting! After 1989 there have been many regional and ethnic conflicts, while prior to the fall of the Berlin wall conflicts were of ideological nature, generated by the opposition between the two power blocks; wars, such as the war in Angola and Mozambique, were the result of this logic. Even mass media sided on favour of one of the parties. The Gulf war was the war mostly covered by mass media; at the end of the war a sole winning power emerged at planetary level, i.e. the USA. This has strongly reduced the need to take a side on favour or against the USA.

Newspapers' directors show a weak interest for foreign policy and in the South of the world, also because of the excessive attention paid to domestic policy and of the increasing provincialism of the Italian political class. Thanks to my job I am often in contact with many politicians and I am convinced that should we ask them where Burundi is, many of them would not know its geographical position. We mentioned the importance of the Internet revolution and the limits of its dissemination: there are at least six thousand villages all over the world without electrical power! I recently read an advertisement which reported the following sentence: «only the lack of electrical power can stop the Internet». I think that the Internet in the Western World has surely conveyed a large mass of information but it has simultaneously reduced the need and the curiosity to know what happens in the world.

In conclusion, and this is not the result of a persecution complex, the South of the planet, and Africa in particular, have a marginal visibility on the information scenario and often they are covered in a questionable manner. This is the case, for instance, of the ship with the slave children reported last April: it was a real abuse. The television broadcasted bibliographic images which did not correspond to the events reported during Easter. A short time later we were informed that in the ship there was not the high number of slave children reported earlier. I am saying this not to diminish the importance of the slavery phenomenon or of the phenomenon of the soldier children in Africa and in other areas of the planet. I think that only if we report an image as likely as possible, we can provide correct information on the serious plagues affecting the continent, such as foreign debt, AIDS diffusion, etc. With regard to AIDS we have to give to Africa the merit of winning its battle to sell drugs against AIDS at a reasonable price, accessible to the African people affected by this disease.

As you can see problems and news from Africa are important from the quantity and quality standpoint. For this reason I think that the Italian newspaper directors and those responsible for information make a mistake when not dealing with the problems seriously. Likely due to their education which leads them to think that it is more attracting reporting the last witty remark made by a politician, they are the first ones to censor the journalists willing to fly to the South of the world and report on the events occurring in this area. I think that we should report on the South of the world because there are people who are interested in it, although in Italy - because of historical reasons - there is a culture characterised by a low receptivity for these issues. France, for example, as a former big colonial power, has been able to maintain a set of linkages and a widespread dissemination of press agencies in Africa. The Spanish newspaper El Pais devotes to Latin America about ten pages every day. As Italians we have showed our provincialism not catching some opportunities, such as in the Horn of Africa, where we should and could have played a more important role also with our compatriots living in Asmara or in Addis Abeba and completely abandoned by our country. I also think of the many Italian missionarys met in Burundi or Rwanda to whom a proper coverage should be given.

To give a sign of counter trend and being aware that it is impossible and utopian to reverse power-based relationships, I suggest organising a lobbying operation, an alliance between magazines and press agencies such as MISNA to engage battles for including the South of the world into the mass media system.

«The Del Monte man»

Analysing the image of the south

MASSIMO GHIRELLI

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN mass media and the South, between the information system in industrialised countries and the Third World, is negatively influenced by two factors. First of all, no information come from the South, and there is no real interest in publishing news from the South; there are no correspondents and no material or data are collected. This would be enough to show that in the North we have a partial and incomplete vision of these Countries. It is generally stated that this is due to the scarce importance of these countries both from an economic and political point of view: Africa, for instance, is still very marginal as far as economic exchanges are concerned. However, this is not always the case: for instance, concerning energy, Italy heavily depends on the oil and natural gas resources of Algeria.

Occasional, inconstant, sensationalist information, that hit the spotlights only when something dramatic happens, something not so important but enough catastrophic to strike our imagination: this is a settled habit of the way to give information about the South. As it happened a few years ago, an Italian family isolated in the centre of Monrovia, the capital city of Liberia, that cannot escape and come back to Italy is more interesting than the reasons and facts that brought that country to a civil war. «Tribal clashes» are usually sold as the «real reason» for conflicts. Is it true? Clearly, there are a set of categories acting as a filter for the image we have of the Third World: what impression can we have of a country from which, occasionally, the same kind of news get to us? How many people among us know what is happening in Bangladesh? Well, in this country, twice a year, there is a flood due to natural causes; this is the only occasion when there is some talk about Bangladesh!.

How does that country live in the meantime? What Bengalese do from one flood to the other one? And more generally, do we know the real causes of the problems of certain Countries?.

Behind indifference there is a precise and intentional will to ignore certain problems, maybe because facing them would mean questioning our own interests. Take the example of Algeria again: we receive some news, from time to time, only because hundreds of thousands of people are killed; but news are never serious, regular or deep enough, we never look for causes. And yet, as we have seen, Algeria is a fundamental country for Italian economy; without its natural gas, we would be obliged to turn out the light!

On the other hand, it is important to be aware of the fact that we receive – and we build up – an image of the Third World, independently from the lack or manipulation of information or the absence of correspondents. We have some general images, coming from different media: from a movie, a cartoon, or from advertising. These images are built on clichés, commonplaces and prejudices that stroke root in our society. They are the minimum result that even such a provincial and closed country as Italy can have. Therefore we have, for instance, some pre-determined ideas on the Arab world, on black Africa, or the far Asia; it is a paradox that for the image of those Countries, the movies of Bruce Lee contributed much more than the serious work of some special correspondents, with their correspondences from China or Japan. In editorial offices, universities, in the movie industry, those who deal with the Third World are considered as odd people, as if they had some strange particular interests.

With the Imigration Archive, but also with some interventions of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, we try to identify and analyse the image of the South in the media sector. However, in the perspective we have just seen, we have to go beyond information: in fact, it is not enough to examine newscasts and newspapers, we also have to pay attention to comics, soap-operas and fiction in general, including cartoons. The first five minutes of Aladdin, a Walt Disney production, give a perfect example, since they show all the possible prejudices and clichés on the Arab world. Right from the beginning the audience, children but also their parents, are «informed» on all that is necessary to know about the Arab world: a country full of crooks, odalisques, camels, scimitars, snake-charmers, fakirs and so on and so forth, that make you think to know everything you should know about this world and thus extinguishing your curiosity to get closer and to really know this world.

We also study advertising. For instance, the Estathé commercial, with its Mexicans with the usual moustaches and sombreros, clearly sleeping and drowsy, that wake up from their siesta only when they hear the tea bottle uncorked! If we can laugh at this commercial and understand it the reason is that behind it there is a well known and shared cliché: this is the image we have of Mexicans. The commercial would not be funny and the advertising message would not be understood

if we were not convinced that all Mexicans have moustaches, are lazy and wear sombreros. Do you know how much the commercial costs? Do you know how many people watch it? Do you know the thousands of times it is passed? Do you know how much these thousands of times cost? Do you understand the power and the impact of this kind of message, based only on a commonplace?

Why do we come to terms with advertising? Because it has an added value; when advertising began using the mass communication media, it had to offer something more than the simple presentation of a product. Peroni has always sold a «Blondie» and not simply a beer. Advertising, in this sense, 'sells' values, offers some life models through the representation of images that have a strong influence on people, just because they are rich in values.

The matter is then to see how advertising considers the Third World, what image it gives of it. We examined a commercial of «the Del Monte man», which lasts approximately one minute. We usually dedicate several hours to the study of these commercials. The aim is to understand how important is the way of presenting images. This commercial is about a fruit juice, even though this is not immediately understood: but right from the first photograms the landscape, the population, the details of their clothes are very clear. In fact, commercials only have 60 seconds to explain what is the product and why you should buy it, providing the context within which you accept and desire it. Therefore, right form the first photograms we understand where we are: the South Seas, a primitive indigenous culture, a primitive economy. This assures the genuineness of the product, produced in an ecologically pure and unpolluted environment. The Del Monte man waits in the cool for the peasants of this meek and happy population to bring him the offer of their work. The character represents a divinity to whom offers are given, the best fruits of the cultivation; he is a white man, with white cloths and he is on an upper level than the other ones, showing thus his superiority. Peasants have worked for years, but only the Del Monte man could steal the heart of fruits, the commercial says. He tastes the juice, thinks for a while and finally nods in assent. The Del Monte man said yes. The entire population is happy. Why are they happy? There are three possible reasons: the first one could be that they would get rich, selling the fruits to Del Monte: but this is not the case. In fact, the multinational company has a turnover of thousands of billions and people working for it earn just three thousand lira per day! It is clear that they will remain poor, and primitive.

The second reason could be that they can finally drink the fruit juice: but things are different. In fact, the commercial shows us images of western young people in some seaside resorts that sip the fruit juice, as the Del Monte mission is to deliver the stolen heart of fruit: there is no need for going to the South Sea to drink it.

But then why are the farm-workers so happy? I think they are happy because they pleased the Del Monte man, and because we can be happy drinking the juice. Just imagine that during the spot a peasant cries out claiming a salary rise or the

right to strike. We come to discover that trade unions are not allowed in Guatemala, where some of the Del Monte plantations are; and in Kenya, after a strike that caused two victims, the company, thanks also to the work of some NGOs rose salaries by 27%, just think of how low the previous one was.

In conclusion people are happy, because this is reassuring for us; in the commercial, Del Monte represents a settled order, where multinational companies have their roles, where indigenous people also have their roles and everyone finds his place. I am a primitive, but this is necessary and I am happy to be a primitive in the South Seas. Fortunately there is someone in the world that accept the task of harvesting fruit, «our» Del Monte agent, that with his know-how steals the heart of the fruit and gives us the juice. Similar images can be found in travel agencies, where a beautiful girl, dressed as a nice slavey, offers us the products of her land. This is the relationship between us and the South. Is it a right, balanced, sharable relationship? Unfortunately I think that this kind of advertising images have a stronger impact than the work that we «the fanatics» of the Third World, have tried to carry out for years.

The role of the special correspondent today

RENATA PISU

WHEN I STARTED MY JOB AS A JOURNALIST, after studying at the university of Beijing, the world was divided into two parts: the division was not between the rich North and the poor South, but between the capitalist West and the communist East. Therefore, the first reports that I proposed or that were assigned to me at that time – during the Seventies' – did not concern the problems linked to underdevelopment, but the contradictions of those regimes that could produce intercontinental missiles but did not allow for the publication of Solyientsin works. Or, in China, that at that time was considered as «near» but where not even Shakespeare was published.

In fact, the world, up to the fall of the Berlin Wall, was divided into the East, the countries of the «real communism» – a definition in quotes that criticised the existing regimes but that gave some hope on the possibility of realising a better communism, and the West, the countries of the so-called «free world». This other definition, always in quotes, left some room for our judgement that could not totally adhere to the kind of freedom we had and that the West wanted to impose to the East.

At that time the East started from Yugoslavia and Albany and ended in Vietnam, where the West fought for years a «dirty war»: today Vietnam, a country about which there is not much talk, even less than Bangladesh, does not represent the East anymore and, even though a communist regime has got the power, the country belongs to the South of the world. That is to say that poverty and underdevelopment prosper, to be ironic, both under the so-called democratic systems and under the so-called authoritarian ones.

I was particularly attracted by the East, the cultural rather than the political one, the far East fascinated me because I thought it could represent an alternative, and not only a political one. Today it seems as if there are no alternatives and so no one deserves any importance by a kind of information that is greedy of catastrophes and mass slaughter rather then social issues. The world of real communism as we knew and reported it was always considered with a certain respect, certainly for the fear that the Cold War could become a Hot War. Even though we already knew the political degradation, and we denounced it, both in USSR and its satellite countries and in China shattered by the excesses of the cultural Revolution – we would never imagine that such a shambles could arise. We discovered it when the Berlin Wall fell and the East appeared as a new South. The poor ragged people, with no dignity were in Europe, knocking on our doors: they did not live anymore in African village huts or in Latin American bidonvilles, they lived in high blocks built by the «real socialism» in the same conditions of abjection as the Third World inhabitants. I would like to underline that today this expression has no sense as it was created when we believe there were two worlds, the capitalist world and the communist world, both of them more or less developed. The third world was that of those countries which did not adhere to the two other worlds and that declared themselves as non committed countries. The fact that they also were underdeveloped was not so important, the East and the West courted them, armed them, plundered them, brought them to foolish wars; in other words they favoured, in the name of their different ideologies and interests, their fall in an abyss where they eventually sunk, a fall that we described, under its more spectacular aspects – as everything now is a show – only since 1989, when, after the collapse of the communism, a «new world order» was wished, or even «the end of the story». On the contrary, from 1990 up to now, the chain of wars, genocides, epidemics, death, hunger and destruction has never stopped, not even for one day and the South, including the former East, is the star of the show and it is presented on our televisions and newspapers only when it is an horror show. Or when our lives and our assets are in danger.

I carried out my adventure, or experience, as special correspondent, in the last decade. When from La Stampa, a daily newspaper for which I had spent four years in Japan as correspondent – a correspondent is stable and not continuously moving as the special correspondent, even if from Tokyo I immediately went to Beijing to report, unfortunately, on the Tienammen facts – Eugenio Scalfari told me smiling: «I did not hire you to be a war correspondent». It was September 1990 and we could not foresee how bloody the following decade would be.

I must say that, from that day on, I was the correspondent on the front of all the undeclared wars, all the announced but not prevented catastrophes, all the «incomprehensible» slaughters, including the Sarajevo one: always travelling in the South of the world, I have never been in Paris, only once in Texas but there again for a bloody fact, the assassination of a black man, in Jacksonville, by the Ku Klux

Klan. Since, I must say, also in the North we have many kinds of South, in Europe as well as in America. But this is another – or the same? – story.

Anyway, I learnt from my own experience that correspondents are a depleted species. It is commonly understood – and in certain instances it is true – that Internet, with all the news you can collect anywhere in the world, can replace the role of correspondents. But news are to be interpreted, evaluated on the spot, knowing the background. Or no? Yes, in theory. Theoretically this should be the correspondent's role. Sometimes, editorial staffs avoid sending a correspondent as they prefer using the net, collecting the news from the various agencies: it would be better to publish the agency's dispatch. However the correspondent of Italian newspapers has a merit and a fault: the merit is that his writing model is often that of the cultured-correspondent of last century, so he uses a refined language, sometimes too much refined and this becomes a fault. The fault, that can never become a merit, is that often, too often, the correspondent is not an expert of the country where he is so rapidly sent, in just a few hours. I am not an expert of Africa, but I left for Burundi and then for Rwanda, and I found myself in the middle of the massacre between hutu and tutsi, trying to understand. But what was to understand? I just saw dead people, abandoned children, poor people escaping from there.

I knew little about Philippines too, but when Abu Sayaf took the first group of hostages in a tourist village of Malaysia, approximately a year and a half ago, I immediately left for Manila and then for the Mindanao island. When, more recently, a hostage was cut his head off, nobody went there. The fact was no more interesting because it was already known. This time it would not have been a news, not even if western hostages were involved. I remember that when I was in Jolo, Philippines, I though that if an American had been among the hostages – while there were Germans, South Africans and Lebanese and a dozen of Philippines, – things would have gone differently.

The two examples of last minute reportage that I have just mentioned, have nothing in common, except the fact that I had to tell what happened, to tell rather than explain. Anyway I believe that if you report correctly, that is to say honestly, you can also provide an explication or at least indicate one. Unfortunately honesty does not always prevail, and the less you know the situation you are in, its causes, its background, the more you risk exaggerating the story, demonising the actors, as if a good reportage was one in which blood can be smelled. In this way one think to catch the attention of a distracted public on the South of the world, a perfect stage of human cruelty and natural catastrophes, where men and women live that «are not like us». Why are not they like us? Maybe, I think, it is always the view of the North that provides the reference cage, made up of commonplaces, racism, "goodness" within which we close the Others, the underdeveloped.

How can we fight against this image of a «ragged» Third World? I would cite a documentary recently broadcasted by Planète, that reports the meeting between a

violoncellist, Yo Yo Ma with Bushmen and their musical tradition. It is not here a matter of «goodness», but of giving information on different aspects and vision of the Other, that is usually exploited or demonised. I also believe in the existence of an ill-concealed racism existing in some voluntary associations from which it appears a «goodness» that hides a clear racist inflection.

Now I would like to talk about my unexpected discovery, during the last decade, of NGOs. During the Cold War, I was not used to visiting Ambassadors or missionaries. I did not like institutions. I had a certain distrust, maybe the worst impact was with the UN agencies. In 1991 I was in Kuwait immediately after the Gulf War and I came to know about the tragic situation of Bidur – without nationality – that had been wrongly accused of collaborationism during the Iraqi occupation. They had been reduced to hunger at just five blocks from where we lived. Since they had no passports, they could not expatriate. When I asked a UNHCR [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees] officer to do something to help them, she told me that the UN could do nothing for them because Bidur had the status of evacuees, that is to say within the country, and not that of refugees. On the contrary I had a very good impression when I met the personnel of NGOs and missionaries, in particular when I met, with Anna Rocchi, Alex Zanotelli in the Korogocho damp site in the suburbs of Nairobi. I saw that beside United Nations and correspondents, there are other persons that work with awareness and common sense and I hope a stronger alliance will be established among correspondents, NGOs and missionaries, in order to become more specialist, thanks to their help, and thus more useful.

Finally, I would like to talk of the acidified girls of Bangladesh. At the beginning I could not come in contact with them and I could not overcome the mistrust of these young women that thought I wanted to exploit them for a journalist scoop. We spent hours and hours drinking tea together and I realised how to make them accept me, convincing them that I did not represent the usual North view upon them. I told them very frankly that I was not judging Bangladesh as an uncivilised country for these acts, for the simple reason that in Italy some decades ago similar things happened. In that case I had to be on an equal footing with them, like human beings telling each other their own experiences.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the fact that as "correspondents" we have the privilege to enter the cage and, if sometimes we succeed in giving dignity to those tat are imprisoned behind the bars, it is because we listened to them, without questioning them insistently, without obliging them to put a wall against a curiosity that is, as they know, just occasional and dictated by the scoop frenzy. There are no scoops in the horror show. At the first editorial staff's meeting of Piroga they said it would be a real scoop to report on the day of a common man of the South, for instance an accountant from Nairobi or a hairdresser from Jakarta. But no mass media looks for a «normality correspondent».

The Region of the big lakes

the conflict

RAFFAELLO ZORDAN

NIGRIZIA, WITH ABOUT 25.000 RUNS, is a monthly magazine that has been dealing with African issues for 120 years; this can already give you an idea of the way we work, i.e. without dwelling on any type of news given just for «entertainment» purposes. To my opinion the Italian and international press are instead dwelling too much on «entertainment» topics. For many years «Nigrizia» has been a bulletin not reporting on Africa, but on problems encountered by the missionaries working in that area. Within this evangelisation process conducted in an area almost deprived of any culture, a more detailed and accurate analysis of the area was started, not focused on missionaries but on the problems of the people living there. Although most of the public is aware of this approach above all thanks to Alex Zanotelli, this process had already started in 1958, when «Nigrizia» changed its format from bulletin into magazine. At that time the director of «Nigrizia» was Bartolucci, a missionary who had worked in Burundi, who started to approach these issues in a different way, probing into the African reality , understanding its dynamics, giving voice to missionaries but also to local churches.

So we ended up doing a type of information viewed as «aggressive» as it reports on some contradictory situations in Africa. I think that the magazine performs an accurate work. We do not want to follow the press trend focusing on «entertainment», we do not want to play any games of this sort. We could use the image and fame that Alex Zanotelli has been acquiring over the past years and let him say anything on Nigrizia. That would be an excellent way to raise funds and increase the circulation of Nigrizia, but that would not be professional. Our targets are instead those readers who want to probe into the issues dealt with. When there

are words in a newspaper you have to read them, although it may be hard sometimes! For example, we explain that Korogocho, where Alex Zanotelli lives, is not something to abominate but the site where there are people who are fighting to get the land they live on and for which they pay a rent. Our task is to illustrate social, political and religious dynamics, without any stereotypes, However we are aware that when working through stereotypes communication is easier and more superficial. But even for us it is difficult [because of internal reasons], to avoid stereotypes, despite of our efforts. The situation is worsened by the poor investments made, the poor skills of the missionary congregations in performing as editors.

Another stereotype which must be defeated: in 1966, while Mobutu was about dying, Laurent-Désiré Kabila leaves from the former eastern Zaire; he is presented by the Italian and French press as the new Che-Guevara. Actually Kabila was one of the many satraps from an area of the present Democratic Republic of Congo – a country characterised by a territory which can scarcely be controlled – ; he went to the capital town, Kinshasa and, supported by Rwanda, Uganda and Angola, took the power in few months. Then it cannot be maintained that the war in the Big Lakes does not make any sense, as often somebody says; it is not an incomprehensible and absurd conflict. Vice-versa, this war is the result of intelligible and specific reasons.

We are not blaming the correspondent, but rather those who, sent to a given geographical area by their director, keep on reporting on «how» and not on «why». These people, not familiar with the reality of a specific country, do not even have the necessary time to investigate on it. On the contrary, «Nigrizia» starts working when «blood starts cooling». The genocide in Rwanda in 1994 has to do with the war broken out in 1996 in the Democratic Republic of Congo, former Zaire. We all agree that it was a terrifying genocide: at least 500.000 people, mostly moderate tutsy and hutu, were slaughtered. Is this enough to say that Kagame, Rwanda's strong man who took the power as result of those slaughters, is the Pole Star of the New African Renaissance" as claimed by Clinton's administration? So far the reasons of that genocide have not been clarified, either from the journalistic or from the juridical standpoint. The formal action was the shooting down of the aircraft with Rwanda's premier Juvénal Habyarinmana on board; the premier, belonging to the hutu ethnic group, had just signed an agreement providing for an ethnic rotation between hutu and tutsi in the government of the country. Who killed him? At that time in Kigali there were Kagame' tutsi troops on the hills, equipped with heavy weapons capable of shooting down an aircraft while it was landing. In the Congo war, in which different African countries participate, geo-political interests with wide ramifications are involved. However we should know that there are counter-trend people, some of them supported by missionaries, NOGs, or local churches.

Our task is to provide critical information For example the reports by Bernanrd Henry-Lévy on forgotten conflicts, published in these days in the Corriere

della Sera. He maintains that after 1989 African wars, or marginal wars, cannot be interpreted, they make no sense and nobody understands why these wars are waged. The Marxist umbrella which previously guaranteed an ideological profile to any revolutionary movements, is now meaningless. In 1994, just before his death, we asked Bartolucci why Rwanda and Burundi, previously mostly catholic countries, had experienced such a decline to become the stage of a horrible slaughter. He replied that evangelisation had likely been superficial, without affecting the mentality of local populations, also because it was viewed as something coming from dominating and colonial powers.

However there are also some opposite examples, where priests and missionaries, under extreme situations, have been able to develop movements of the civil society; these might be boring events to be reported, but they can surely illustrate better than the «entertainment» press the actual African reality. With regard to Kabila's seizing of power in 1997, Nigrizia published a 32 page dossier, titled American Pax from Zaire to Congo, where an analysis is made of the legitimacy achieved through fighting; for example many African regimes legitimate themselves through fighting, a typical self-reproducing mechanism under decay situations. In former Zaire [in the early '90s], national sovereign conferences were held, where many political and trade-union forces of the Country met to create an actual national transition mechanism, in the attempt to remove completely colonial heritage and a clanic view of the power, a process which nowadays could be undertaken by Kabila junior.

Our magazine also aims at probing into the biographies of the major personalities. Who is Kagame? Who is Pierre Buyoya, the present president of Burundi? Buyoya – just when the Country experiences an ethnic alternation [i.e. tutsi do not govern any longer in an exclusive manner and the president belongs to the hutu ethnic group], when the power leverages are less strict compared to the past – take the power through a coup d'état, thus jeopardising the whole normalisation process in Burundi.

«Nigrizia» considers the Internet as an useful tool. The edition of July, in fact, reports from the Internet site WWW.ASMARINO.COM a 25 page letter published in English in Asmara, in which dissent is expressed against the Eritrean president Isaias Afeworki. In this letter some problems, never raised since the 1993 independence in Eritrea, are highlighted: lack of democracy, malfunctioning of the institutions, etc... This letter brought about the reaction of Asmara government, which fired the ministers who had signed the letter. Our editorial staff resorts to our contacts in Asmara, but we would not have got this new without the network. Lastly we ask our readers a commitment code: i.e. it is important to be not only a reader informed of what happens in Africa, but also an active citizen, in order to create a network through individual commitment. Some people say that we are dreamers; however this dream has been lasting for 120 years and we still keep on dreaming.

Misna mandate

father SANDRO LANFRANCONI

« GEOGRAPHY OF COMMUNICATION is the litmus paper of the economic geography characterised by a divide between the rich North and the poor South. «This means that what maintained by the supporters of the global village» is only partially true. In 1995, for example, 15% of the world population owned 75% of the phone lines and over 50% had never made a phone call. In Sierra Leone [western Africa] there are 233 radios, 10 TV sets every 1.000 inhabitants; while in the United States, with respect to the same sample of population, there are 2.122 radios, 850 TV sets and 602 phone lines. Basically, technology is never neutral, as it is affected by the unfair relationship between the North and the South of the world. Data and figures related to the «digital divide» between «advanced countries» and «developing countries» show that 70% of the world population never heard about the Internet and only 5- 6 % has access to the network; round 85% of those who have access to information and communication technologies [Ict] live in industrialised countries: Canada and the United States account for 57% of navigators, while Africa and Middle East together hardly account for 1%.

WHEN AN EVENT DOES NOT BECOME NEWS.

The gap between the North and the South of the world is not related to communication only, but also to a «strategic» sector such as information. In this context the cultural colonisation phenomenon results in a univocal interpretation of the reality, i.e. the interpretation given by the mass media power. In the South of the world life is characterised by a high number of events. And journalism means exactly this:

identifying an event worth of being reported. In the British journalism the possibility of any events to be turned into a journalistic information is named news worthiness, while selecting others' information is named gatekeeping. Actually, the event is only partly the direct source of the news; in fact between the primary source [i.e. the infinite number of events] and those who have to select and codify the news, the industrialisation of the information production process has interposed an organised network of facilities named press agencies, They are the real "information ladies" dictating the rules of the game. Nowadays journalists do not search for news, rather news search for journalists; and the news from press agencies reach journalists up to their desks in their editorial office, providing them with huge amounts of papers. Consequently information production turns to be – to a large extent – a semi-passive processing of news. If in Kinshasa, in the former Zaire, a bomb explodes in Limete market, in 99% of the cases the news will be reported by Reuters' or Associated Press's stringer . Divide between the North and the South of the world does not relate only to technologies only, but above all to the location and number of international desks. The desks of the industrialised countries [USA and Europe mainly] are scattered all over the North of the world, while in the South, above all in Africa, there is a low number of journalists working for foreign newspapers and broadcasting companies. For example CNN, the American broadcasting company, has only three desks in Africa, as well as the Italian agency Ansa. Additionally, most international desks located in the South of the world are press agencies. This is mainly due to economic reasons. For a director of an European newspaper it is more cost effective paying the wires [press agencies] services annually than maintaining an editorial staff in Nairobi. In case of need, he will send a reporter on the field, but only for a short time. In Africa there are local and valuable journalists. Unfortunately many of them, such as Pius Njawé, director of Messager, the most important independent newspaper in Camerun, suffered any types of ill-treatments to defend the right to press freedom. However we can give something for sure. News from developing countries are poor as to their number and quality; these countries seem to be bound to be marginal in the more general context of the international information circuits. Western press – it is useless to hide it – reports on the South of the world only in case of exceptional events, such as the Marines landing in Somalia, or particularly cruel events such as Rwanda genocide in 1994. Otherwise they show their interest only if an actress flies to Africa for a safari, or if a child who has lived in the forest with the monkeys is found. In Africa, instead, many important cultural events take place. Have you ever read in western newspapers about the Pan African festival of cinema and television held in Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso? Last edition, held from February 24 to March 3 2001, was almost ignored by western media; on the contrary the mass suicide in Kanungu, Uganda, aroused a lot of interest; a macabre event very inaccurately reported by western journalists, according to cultural parameters which have very little to do with Africa.

Unfortunately, news selection criteria have nothing to do with the social, cultural and professional values of the individual journalists. Then, the higher the distance between the country and the reader, the faster the events occurring in it [that's the reason why the slow development progresses in the South are of no interest to northern newspapers and TV news]; or, the lower the importance of a country, the more negative and stereotyped the events, usually related to VIPs.

A COUNTER-TREND VOICE

In this scenario, characterised by a high unbalance in the news flows, we have to understand how to give voice to the South of the World, to all those who do not have it. If the '80s and '90s scenario was mainly characterised by television, it is now given for granted that in the new millennium everything will be based on digital technologies, the Internet above all.

For this reason in 1997 Fesmi [Italian Missionary Press Federation] and Serms [Italian Missionary Service], in co-operation with all the active forces of the missionary world, established MISNA [Missionary Service News Agency], an information agency specialised on the South of the world and on the recently established churches. In over three years this experience, started with few means at our disposal but with a technological innovative tool such as the Internet, has become a reference point for Italian and international mass media. The winning card of MISNA are the thousands of missionaries and volunteers scattered all over Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceania, They are privileged sources which testify with their life their commitment to the truth of the Gospel. They are the reference points of an alternative information which, out of the easy western schemes, of the power-based logics which affect the interpretation of the reality, of the catastrophism which characterise our mass media, is committed to give voice to all those who do not have it. Presently its staff consists of seven laic journalists, a secretary and a combonian missionary, who edit daily news in three languages [English, French and Italian]. We hope that this experience, supported by the Missionary Church, can grow to serve all human beings created by God as his own image.

INCREDIBLE, ALTHOUGH TRUE

Why so much interest for a very small press agency specialised in the South of the world i.e. in those areas which until the establishment of the agency were not represented? How did this press agency succeed in influencing an European Head of State Jacques Chirac, who in 1999 tried to deny one of its news according to which France was militarily involved in Guinea Bissau? MISNA owes its fame to scoops such as this one being reported in two years of activity. The history of the missionaries agency is undoubtedly fascinating as, while having few human, financial and

technological resources at its disposal, it can rely on tens of thousand of direct witnesses of the events being reported. Its «potential» co-operators are the 14.000 Italian missionaries [from round 40 different congregations] living in those areas; these co-operators become about 300.000 if we add the foreign missionaries and the laic associations, groups and movements for civil rights with which MISNA is in constant contact. In counter-trend vis-à-vis the globalisation of the knowledge, its information potential is huge. This is the first point of strength of the agency, which has been able to exploit the widespread presence of people in the area who constantly communicate by any means: fax, traditional phones, satellite phones, PC and modem. But it is the very independent nature of MISNA which made the achievement of these targets possible. MISNA is independent, it is an expression of the civil society, not of the institutions; it was able to report, in real time, any massacres and war crimes regardless of the ideological and political position of those who were perpetrating them. Its service – on line and free for everybody – has round 65.000 visitors/month, most of them are world press agencies which on their turn transmit MISNA news. Thirty/thirty-five news are up-dated daily, in addition to 40 special monthly analyses in three languages. Access to daily news is free, while consultation of archive and search engine is upon payment. Since last April the digital heading HTTP://WWW.MISNA.ORG was taken over by MISNA ltd. owned by various missionary congregations.

Piroga project

ANNA ROCCHI

LET'S NOW MOVE ON TO THE LAST PART of this review on mass media and the South of the world, concerning mass media and NGOs. We edit a magazine, Piroga, whose director is Renata Pisu; also Toni Fontana collaborates with us. Piroga tries to combine the so called value added provided by the NOGs and the technical and professional skills of the journalists.

The Piroga project, which includes the realisation of the magazine Piroga along with other activities, was developed by CISP, COOPI and VIS upon a funding allocated by the Minister for Foreign Affairs in 1997. The project was implemented with the aim to carry out the large programme of «cultural policy» and re-qualification of the non governmental cooperation which the NGOs CISP, COOP and VIS have been developing in the past years [e.g. through the International Master in Cooperation for Development at the University of Pavia]. These three NGOs agreed upon the need to go beyond the traditional model of NGO magazine, targeted to experts of the field and to members, opting for a magazine which could be addressed to people interested in international issues, attracted by «alien» cultures, by different countries and interested in the work of those who perform their activity on the field.

With regard to contents, Piroga aims at:

— I. dealing with and present to non experts the complex issues related to international solidarity, relationships between North and South, search for new sustainable development models, ethnic conflicts, international debt and migrations, food safety etc.;

— reasserting priority of policy over economic choices, enhancing cooperation for development, pursuing criteria including the citizenship concept, giving a higher value to the work of the civil society in all countries and providing readers with the opportunity to participate in a positive change;
— better disseminating the work performed by NGOs, presenting points of view on issues suggested by us, informing on what actually occurs in the countries where we work [supported by those who live in the South of the worlds], in the attempt to present images not linked to the stereotypes proposed by newspapers and televisions;
— combining information reliability and analysis with an attractive and interesting format;
— combining NOGs culture and their knowledge of the local contexts and global problems with the expertise of communication professionals who can help us to «translate» our knowledge in a more popular form.

As to the tools, some innovative elements were identified, such as involvement of a group of friend journalists; co-ordination of NOGs in the various countries, creation of a network of intellectuals, activists, journalists, etc, from the South of the world. Now I give the floor to Nicola Perrone who will illustrate the experience of the magazine International Solidarity.

Between cliches and indifference

how italian mass media report on the south of the world

NICOLA PERRONE

WHAT IS THE IMAGE OF THE SOUTH ON ITALIAN MEDIA? How do they talk about the South? What are the main clichés? What is the role of the NGOs magazines and in particular of Solidarietà Internazionale? [International Solidarity]. These are the questions that will be answered in my paper, with some practical examples, through a scientific research work started in 1997. CIPSI [Coordination of Civil Society Initiatives of International Solidarity] founded the sociological research observatory, Mass media and Cooperation with the aim of monitoring and trying to change the negative image that Italian mass media use to describe the Southern Countries, and of using the Observatory's results in the magazine Solidarietà Internazionale, as a way to fill a gap. We have two poles: the first one, in collaboration with the university of Rome La Sapienza, carries out some research activities and it yearly updates the information on the changes and contents of the media representations of poor Countries; on the other hand, we have the opportunity of publishing a scientific magazine, coordinated with NGOs, CIPSI, and that can interact with this observatory, taking advantage of its positive aspects, providing a different information model compared to the dominant ones.

I will start telling you three very practical episodes in which I was personally involved, concerning the specific aspect of the organisations working on the field and at local level in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Even though I am a sociologist and deal with communication, I worked abroad for a long time in some development projects and I experienced some situations concerning communications.

The first experience was in Kenya, where an English television was realising a documentary on the activity of a cooperation project by a British NGO. I was there, for a pre-viability study. The television crew went to a village where the organisation had developed a training project for children. Instead of explaining the project, instead of telling about the activity that had been underway for two years, they asked the children to build up the image they wanted to show. Instead of reporting on something, they decided to build ex novo an artificial and misleading image. The British television obliged the village inhabitants to give the school the name of the president of the NGO that funded the building. The documentary director asked the children, who usually went barefoot, to wear shoes, because the English audience would prefer so: a real example of violation of the local culture. In fact, children did not go barefoot because they could not afford to buy shoes, but because it was their habit. Furthermore, as the school provided a health prevention service – it was a quite well structured project form a social point of view, with a refectory for a complementary food program in which also the children's families were involved – the television refused to document this and to tell that in this school people could eat! It was not an institutional documentary of a fund raising campaign of the NGO that wanted to show certain things and not others. The television's answer to my criticisms was: «in our country people have an image of Africans that are poor, barefoot and hungry, we have to come up to their expectations». This happens when information, instead of telling the reality in an objective way, create the image to give, often finalising it to fund raising, selling misery to receive money.

The second episode concerns the intervention of a local body of Northern Italy, that, «after discovering hunger in the world» decides to allocate a considerable sum of money – more than 20 billions – for a large country of central Africa for a sanitary intervention. As a sign of welcoming the host country thanks this body inviting the foreign delegation on the occasion of the delivery of the hospital. The delegation was offered board and lodging . But it was composed of 45 members: the entire city council, the managers of the engineering firms and bank executives that wished to open new branches in the country. This is how cooperation and solidarity can sometimes set the ground for totally different activities, such as foreign trade, banks, other actors with different interests and aims. Unfortunately in the delegation there were not any technicians to fix the equipment and there was not even a doctor to train the local personnel. Furthermore, an entire village was evacuated to build the hospital. The members of the Italian delegation stayed there for one month, then the «dictator» of the Country threatened them to take a biologist as a hostage in case the structure did not work and then asked for specialised personnel from Italy. A magazine dealing with international cooperation should have the courage to denounce what the same international cooperation tries to do in some instances.

The third example describe how information can be a means of denunciation: in Guatemala an indigenous political activist disappears. His partner is American and through three hunger strikes and the involvement of American mass media she eventually finds out that her lover was seized, tortured and killed. And the fact had been hidden for years because the Guatemalan officer who killed the man was an important CIA informer. In this case mass media played a positive role, in defence of human rights. I suggest you read the book of Jennifer Harbury Voglio strappare al fango le tue ossa published in Italy by Rizzoli in 1997.

Let us come back to the image of impoverished countries on mass media: thanks to the observatory we are monitoring, year after year, at least four main Italian daily newspapers [Il Corriere della Sera, La Repubblica, Il Messaggero, Il Mattino] and some weekly magazines, to verify how they report on and how information change on developing countries to see what are the main clichés, or the problems a magazine is faced with when dealing with international cooperation.

The image of the countries of the South is always linked to sensationalism, using such terms as hunger, war, poverty, desperation, underdevelopment, cruelty, behind the times. Those of us working for NGOs instead, know that peoples exist who positively build up, day after day, their own history. I will read you the headlines of some articles appeared on the main Italian newspapers: Zaire, war guns and dances; Zaire: one million people escaping from hunger; Algeria thirty-one civilians were slaughtered and decapitated; Burundi massacre of innocent people; Algerian children decapitated and butchered and so on and so forth. We cannot see any sign or description for knowing other cultures, to which neither respect nor comprehension are given. Anyway this is not always the case and there are some exceptions, some individual journalists, most of the times special correspondents, that thanks to their direct relationship with some realities have developed a different knowledge from the one given by clichés. The other person is considered as primitive and underdeveloped, a need deriving from the Western collective conscious and unconscious: the need for feeling good and kind, the need for feeling safe, giving to «other» cultures negative and problematic images.

I have here other articles, the first one is: He is a professor, she is a Yanomami India. When love becomes impossible, and the sub-headline says: «An American anthropologist marries a native woman, he brings her to the United States, but she cannot resist, because she cannot stay in the comfortable home with the car, with all the comforts that American civilization can offer to a middle-class family». At the end the girl goes back to the forest, abandoning the three children. Five years later the anthropologist goes and searches for her and he finds her naked with her body painted; he can hardly recognise her, because she has lost so much weight from the times when she was used to eating «hamburgers and French fries». Clearly this is a negative representation, especially if compared to the Italian culture, in which children play a fundamental role. The other

article has this headline: Bangkok: poisonous street-walkers for tourists, and the sub-headline is «girls sprinkle drug on their breasts, even a kiss can be lethal». Here again we have an article that uses some sort of exoticism to discredit the South.

Another aspect that emerged from our observatory is the immigration phenomenon, since we do not want to separate international cooperation and solidarity from immigration. The representations of the immigrants in Italian mass media are constantly linked to criminality, crime news, illegal actions, in all cases danger situations. Just read the headlines The Immigrants' Bribeland in Milan; Kickbacks, Blackmails, Exploitation, or the case of the «Black Baby» abandoned in a wealthy neighbourhood, even if the black babies are not the only babies that are abandoned. When I worked in an assistance centre, every morning the police arrived with at least two or three Italian and white babies, that had been abandoned or that had been found at Termini railway station. Another widespread cliché is the one on the emergencies of refugees coming from Albania: the false wrecks, coasts besieged, etc. It is interesting to observe that the image of the immigrants suddenly changes when we talk of the economy, when the Paymaster General, Monorchio, tells us that, to revitalise the Italian economy, «our Country needs fifty thousand extra-communitary workers per year, otherwise firms cannot work».

Another element for thought that is common to all the issues I have treated is that the Countries of the South become interesting when they are strictly linked to Italian politics, the «Palace» one. When an immigration law is passed, then mass media talk about it. Another element is that we deal with immigration when Italian trade interests are concerned: if Fiat «increases sales» or the production of cars is moved to Argentina, then these will be news. Development cooperation seems interesting only when a bribe land appears or when a new law on cooperation is being approved, after the years of scandals or when the big international agencies and the United Nations tackle these issues.

The action of the root, of civil society's groups of Africa, Asia and Latin America and of Italian NGOs is absolutely absent from the big mass media. There are some exceptions for emergencies, the natural calamities and the building of large facilities. In fact, in these cases a journalist evaluation aims at seeing if the project is expensive, if technology is sophisticated, and it is really an important work, and in their realisation governmental actors are involved – big agencies and companies – accordingly to the charitable model. After these considerations, the role of our magazine in my opinion is to give visibility to the positive aspects of the South. A working idea to follow together would be to give voice to the directly involved people in the South, to the journalists of the developing countries, etc. My suggestion is to try and not be speaking for others. Another problem is to give a context to news: if negative facts occur, they must be reported, it is our duty, but

we could go deeper into detail, to provide the public with a general idea of the reality at social, economic, political and historical level. We also have to learn to respect the their cultures and to claim the basic rights: the right to health, food and employment.

Just remember that the problem exists – that concerns directly the communication sociology – of how news start, what is their source, who owns them, a point on which we cannot intervene. But we can use these news as alternative press. We should rethink the role of correspondents, that is often at the margin in the main editorial offices. I completely share the opinion of Mr. Ghirelli about the enormous power of advertising in our country. If a producer or a director propose a program for a reportage on developing countries, a sponsor must be found and dealt with, since if he does not like the project he will not pay and the program is finished.

In conclusion, I think we should try to make alliances both with other newspapers and individual journalists that are particularly sensible to these matters. Why do not we create, with the new government, a common editorial for all the existing NGOs, magazines and missionaries on the role of international solidarity today, asking for an intervention in the legislation? We could do the same for many other issues. From this alliance, aimed at a greater impact on the general public, we try to overcome differences, looking for what unites us. Let me concluding by stressing the concept that Italian and international social realities deserve changes, and this is our role.

Debate

[extract]

Maybe we are faced with a demonization of the Seattle People on behalf of mass media, with respect to all the pacifist and non destructive instances? [audience]

[TONI FONTANA] African realities are particularly complex, and that is why I do not agree on some of the declared statements. As to what Raffaello Zordan said on the facts of the Big Lakes region, I share the contents but I would stress the need to define the responsibilities of the principals of the massacres. We must say frankly that in Rwanda a scientifically planned genocide took place carried out by a regime that had based its power on ethnic belongings. In fact, the catholic press is often indulgent towards this genocide, even denying a number of dramatic tears that stroke the catholic Church in that region.

Even though I have been very critical towards press – and I am a professional journalist – I do not think that a tribunal should be set up to accuse mass media on a regular basis. The same information operators are faced with mechanisms that go beyond them. In other words: I went to the falls of the river Kagera, between Tanzania and Rwanda, where, coming from the Lake Victoria, dozens of decapitated victims were massed. I wrote an article on this and I had a certain echo and I think I did right to describe the reality as it was. In Africa, from the Red Sea coasts to Sierra Leone there are many forgotten conflicts, which are not represented and are not made visible.

As to the Genoa G8 I hope there will be thousands of people peacefully marching, given the fact that there are many reasons for protesting, but I also hope there will be much fewer violent people.

Dont'you think that also the image of the acidified girls from Bangladesh is a sensationalism? [audience]

[RENATA PISU] I wish one of those girl were here to explain you how life has changed for her and for at least sixty other girls, from the moment in which we "used" their image. In Dacca, the capital city of Bangladesh, thanks to this intervention, coordinated also by COOPI, less than a year ago the first centre for serious burns was opened. I think this was the first time that a written intervention brought to some positive results. If we do not provide images, the target will not be hit. I do not think that a positive fact could be considered as a disvalue.

[MICHELE ROMANO, COOPI] It was not we who burnt these women with acid: it is something that happens and about which I think a position must be taken. In the case of the disfigured women information are fundamental. COOPI could not have started a campaign in favour of these girls if we did not have the information that are necessarily crude, and please note that we did not use the most gruesome ones. Without this kind of campaigns, we would not respect one of the main commitments for a humanitarian association

I have a question for Massimo Girelli. Usually, to make the news arrive more directly, an identification process is needed. In a recent conference on the war in the former Yugoslavia someone said that we felt this war much closer than other conflicts because people were dressed like us, because they drove the same cars, because we saw them going out to do the shopping just as we do here. These were rhythms with which it was very easy to identify. How can we conciliate the need for representing an otherness, respecting the differences, without falling in the trap of identification that often brings to flattening? [Anna Rocchi]

[MASSIMO GHIRELLI] We must avoid flattening on the choices among the largest communication media. We must learn to go beyond the images that are presented us every day: wars, epidemics, famines. We should not forget that from the Red Sea to Senegal there are some marvellous archaeological places, there is a cultural life, there are women entrepreneurs: right on the territory where wars occur. But also with respect to these wars: are we sure they can easily be attributed to tribal conflicts or to the whims of a dictator?

Do we really want to make a beautiful reportage on African children? Let us go to Switzerland and see the banks, where the money that caused the death of those kids is deposited. If we want to understand Kabila, then we shall go to the diamonds bosses or the oil bosses: we should carry out an inquiry on Texaco, Shell, Elf, to explain why the African children die. Just as South Africa recently showed with the fight for the free access to medical drugs against Aids, in Africa

people die in a given way because this is preferable. Most African countries are still dominated by external and very powerful interests. In order to give truthful and serious information we must look for the real reasons that lie behind what is showed us. If the general public knew how things really go in these regions, then it would know what to do and would understand, for instance, that you can deposit your savings in Banca Etica [Ethic Bank], and not in Istituto San Paolo di Torino, if this latter [as it did twenty years ago] helps the Apartheid regime in South Africa.

[MAURA VIEZZOLI] Certainly the relationship between communication and cooperation leaves many questions open, that we will tackle in future meetings. For the conclusions of this roundtable I give the floor to professor Gianni Vaggi.

[GIANNI VAGGI] During the master we dealt with knowledge, and not only with information or communication, of the development and cooperation processes. The problem, as I always say to my students, is the one of glasses, that is to say the capability of putting on and off different glasses to take different points of view, with the hope of getting to understand how the South of the world sees us. From this debate I think two main points appear: the enormous advantage of having many different sources of information and the possibility of taking contacts and knowing directly these realities on the field.

Presentation of speakers

TONI FONTANA

Journalist and a correspondent. He has followed conflicts in Africa, Middle East and Balkans from 1989 on. In particular, he realised reportages form Burundi, Rwanda, Somalia, Ethiopia, Mozambique, South Africa. He worked twenty years for the daily newspaper L'Unità; after an experience in RAI, he now works in the press agency Italia Stampa.

MASSIMO GHIRELLI

Author of radio and television programs among which are many reportages on the Third World. He conceived and realised for six years the television program Nonsolonero [notonlyblack] on immigration and racism. Information «expert» in the Central Technical Unit of the Direction General for Development Cooperation of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs where he coordinates the evaluation of NGO programs for Development Education and Information. He carried out many missions to Africa [Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Cape Verde, Rwanda, Burundi, South Africa] and to the Middle East [Lebanon, Syria, Israel, Occupied Territories] evaluating projects concerning regional radios, television broadcasting stations, video centres, press agencies. Information Advisor for some international organisations, he has been, since 1991, director of the Archive on Immigration, and he is the director of the multicultural magazine Caffé; he collaborates with various newspapers.

SANDRO LANFRANCONI

S.M.A. [Società Missioni Africane] member, as a priest he spent 25 years in the Ivory Coast. He studied at the Crec-Avex in Lion of Babene. He obtained the master in social communication at the Pontifical Salesian University of Rome. He is deputy director of ISCOM, Institute of

Communication Sciences, department of ICAO of Abidjan with the tasks of theoretical and practical learning. He carried out a pastoral and first evangelisation activities in an urban environment in the suburbs of Abidjan and collaborated with the Ivory Coast radio and television. At present he is collaborating with MISNA [Missionary Service News Agency].

NICOLA PERRONE

Communication sociologist, and he is at present member of the Advisory Board of CIPSI [Coordinamento di Iniziative Popolari di Solidarietà Internazionale] with competence for Communication, Press Office, External Relations. He is also the coordinator of the magazine «Solidarietà Internazionale» and of the CIPSI Observatory Mass media and developing countries.

RENATA PISU

Sinologist, with a degree at the University of Beijing during the 60s. She was a correspondent for the daily newspaper La Stampa in Tokyo from 1981 to 1986. Since 1990 she has been a special correspondent for the daily newspaper La Repubblica for the Far East, Rwanda, Bosnia, Chiapas, Indonesia, Bangladesh. She is also the author of various books and essays on China and Japan, among which are *La via della Cina* and *Alle radici del Sole*.

ANNA ROCCHI

Degree in Political Sciences at the University of Perugia and obtained a master in Media Studies at the University of Sussex [UK]. She lived in Africa for various years [Burkina Faso, Ethiopia and Kenya], working in the international cooperation for different countries [Somalia, Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda, Eritrea, Kenya, Ethiopia]. Back to Italy is now working on information, communication and cooperation program at European level. She is executive director of Piroga.

RAFFAELLO ZORDAN

Professional journalist, chief editor for 11 years of the magazine «Nigrizia», the monthly magazine of combonian missionaries specialised in Africa. Besides strictly African topics – he follows in particular the area of the Big Lakes – he deals with development cooperation, immigration and some public opinion campaigns [cancellation of the foreign debt for poor countries, armed banks, antipersonnel mines] that the magazine launched or contributed to widespread.