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**invitation
to readers**

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This review subsists on the voices it manages to express and on their variety: whoever would like to collaborate is welcome. Please write to **Here - notes from the present, via Bastia 11, 20139 Milano, Italy, phone-fax 0039-02-57406574, e-mail: massimoparizzi@tin.it**

26th December 2004 to April 2005: Diary

Here

notes from the present

December 26th. A tsunami off the coast of the Northern point of the island of Sumatra caused huge waves which hit the coasts of Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, India, Sri Lanka, Burma, and the Maldives, and even reached Somalia and Kenya. Today, January 2nd 2005, the UN are reporting over 150,000 dead people.

From the latest number of this review

The pessimism of rationality says that the powerful of the world will not learn anything from this. One of them, Secretary of State of the only great world power, Colin Powell, while speaking of the funds allocated by his country to help with disaster relief of the populations hit by the tsunami, said: "I hope that the world will see that the United States is willing to reach out to the Muslim world in this time of need" ("la Repubblica", December 31st, 2004). Which 'normal' person vaguely thought that the men and women swept away by the waves were Muslim, Buddhist or Christian?

Arona, Italy, December 29th

Marina Massenz

A quiet morning in Arona, reading and writing. The weather is still beautiful. My mother feels better these days, so she went for a walk to look at the lake. I carried on with my work till lunch time. After eating together, she had a rest and I read the "Repubblica".

From "la Repubblica", December 28th. "The catastrophe in the Bay of Bengal is a second-class disaster according to the cynical ranking made by insurance companies round the world... Very

Coverage of the tsunami; they call it "Noah's

Flood". But a flood comes from the sky and the water is fresh; this one has come from the earth, and the water was salty. All those fields are now covered in burning salt. Death once more, since it is from there, from that land, that the produce the inhabitants lived on sprouted. Barrenness, dryness; after the great wave, a lack of water.

few people in the area involved in the tsunami have an insurance."

The earth *and* the sea. If the coasts of Indonesia, Sri Lanka and India had still been covered in mangroves as they were twenty years ago, some experts say, they would have hindered the tsunami, thus reducing its force and lessening its impact. Those low mangrove trees, which thrust their roots into water, like tentacles. On the contrary, instead of branching trunks and roots thrust in the soil in order to contain it, the coast was covered in 'resorts'. As close to the sea as possible, as it is essential for a tourist on holiday to walk just a few steps to lie down in the sun.

As if, in the course of this 'tourist mutation', the inhabitants themselves had lost their memory, had suffered a loss; that ancient knowledge of places, with their natural dangers, as well as their beauties, and their just as natural human defences. What is daunting, for example, is also the fact that in front of such frightening going out of the sea there wasn't a just as frightened, but prompt and wise, reaction to escape. It is as if, as the sea subsided, what followed was a vacuum, a silence, a passive wait; yet, many of the people who live in that part of the world know that, before a tsunami, water withdraws. For some, the need to escape kicked off as the wave appeared; too late then, because its speed did not allow for a way out.

How come that the 'tourist mutation' wipes out not only the native buildings, plants, or customs of a place, but also its memory, that memory which is so vital in order to live in the world, and which

corresponds to knowing where you are? Will we all turn into a single huge resort, built in exactly the same way at all latitudes? Or are we still in time to 'give it another thought' as the inhabitants of the earth? And to close the year 2004 thinking we are part of a whole world of human beings, who inhabit an alive planet.

Milan, Italy, December 30th

Lucianna Argentino

Two episodes today at work.

Morning. A young woman I know came to my checkout counter and as she was getting her shopping out of the trolley we talked about this and that; in the meanwhile Rana, a young man from Bangladesh - where he has left his wife and two children - walked up to us to help her put her shopping in the carriers. Rana usually helps us and himself by putting away trolleys and baskets, by filling customers' carriers and accompanying them to their cars to unload and load their shopping or, in some cases, even accompanying them home. The young woman, however, told me: "Don't put the carriers there because I don't want *that one* to fill them". All right, as you like, I thought, though I didn't like that *that one* at all. Anyway, we kept chatting and I asked her: "Where are you going to celebrate tomorrow night?". And she said: "I'm going to an Indian restaurant with some friends, you know, I really like it...".

Evening. Lots of people at my checkout counter. A proud lady wreathed in smiles said she had bought a tin of meat for the dog with the young trump playing his guitar in front of the supermarket to scrape some money together. The girl who was paying me and I looked at each other and almost in unison said: "Yes, but what about him?". The lady hesitated, blushed, and then said: "Of course I'll give him something too now".

The American business bank Prudential reveals that the area hit by the tsunami risks being abandoned by great American corporations. Nike and Reebok - sports shoes - are apparently reconsidering their strategic choices. While they had previously privileged Indonesia and Thailand, they are now thinking of moving their production to China.

Camisano Vicentino, Italy, January 8th

Mariela De Marchi

Today I received an e-mail launching an appeal for a two-year-old boy from Northern Europe, who was found alone in Phuket. There was a photo showing him sad and melancholy. I was struck by his expression. I have not seen many images of the tsunami, since I do not watch TV. I immediately forwarded the message. A few minutes later I wondered whether my disturbance had been due to the sight of the face of a specific child or rather to the fact that he was white and very close to my current idea of a child.

January 3rd. *The visit of US Secretary of State Colin Powell and of the governor of Florida Jeb Bush to Thailand, Indonesia and Sri Lanka starts. Jeb Bush has underlined that his presence as the President's brother is a sign of sympathy towards the populations hit by the tsunami. "I believe that family is important in many places, just as it is in the United States" he said.*

Modena, Italy, January 10th

Maria Granati

Yesterday Saverio and I visited an extraordinary exhibition here in Modena called *Action painting, American Art 1940-70*. Apart from the pleasure of seeing once again some beautiful paintings by Klee, Kandinsky, Mondrian, etc., in the first room, the strongest emotion came later. I knew a lot about American contemporary painting, thanks to previous exhibitions held in Modena and organized, as this one, by a meritorious banking foundation, and all very well-set up, well-documented, rich in works of art, with wonderful lighting, free admission and even free guides; but I knew very little about Action Painting and of that period, i.e. from the 40s to the 70s of the twentieth century, apart from Rothko, who was Russian-American, Jackson Pollock and others that can be found in museums all over the world. I had never seen Sam Francis, Franz Kline or Mark Tobey, who had come to New York from Wisconsin and invented 'dripping' a few years before Pollock! Abstract painters, Cubists, Surrealists, Expressionists: almost all of them arrived in New York from the

January 5th. *French journalist of "Libération" Florence Aubenas is kidnapped in Iraq. Also many Iraqis are victims of kidnappings every day, either for money or other reasons.*

January 8th. *In Aaytha, in the north of Iraq, American aeroplanes bomb a house mistaken for a military target. 14 dead. The USA military leadership admits the mistake.*

province and got into that feverish creative climate that characterizes all artistic avant-gardes. Though, besides the result of each single work of art, which was obviously different, what thrilled me most was realizing that that climate had been created thanks to contacts with other painters who had already emigrated from Russia, exiled by Stalin, and above all from Europe and Nazi Germany, or who had simply reached America for various reasons from France, Holland, etc. A real artistic community, extremely lively and varied, whose distinctive features, I believe, cannot be described as either European or American, but simply as Western, that is typically ours. As if to say that America seemed to me to be Europe itself, and Europe seemed to be America, and this produced a strange kind of joy, a sense of common cultural identity, which I do not always perceive. One may say that this is not such a great discovery, but something obvious, when dealing with art. But I believe it is something deep instead, made of cultural substance and sensitivity. I have never been anti-American, not even instinctively, not even when they were in Vietnam, although I obviously protested against that war. It may be because when I was a child the story went that those who had helped us throw out the Germans and had made it possible for my father to come back from Germany had been the Americans. And I had also seen them, all smiles; I can still remember them: one had taken me in his arms, had given me some chocolate. We have been talking much more about the USA than about all the rest of the world lately (also because the rest of the world says less about itself, and I am thinking mainly about the great powers, China, Russia, where the press is known to be not free and democracy is what it is): instead, about the USA we get news, both political news and reportages, controversies, studies on the Empire within the global

world, on Bush and the ‘New Conservatives’, etc. We know just about everything. Even there they are trying to control news and fabricate a convenient tale for things that count, but they are not in Italy, their press has always been free, often even embarrassing, at times revealing the most secret skeletons in the cupboard, and nobody, as politically powerful as they may be, dreams of controlling the whole mass media network (as it happens here in Italy), not even a worthless little channel, or of throwing out disagreeable journalists from TV stations. This, in itself, portrays a slap-up democracy, so to speak.

Of the power to print

Here

notes from the present

“A slap-up democracy” Maria Granati, a former communist member of Italian parliament, wrote when describing the United States and thinking about their media. Even Noam Chomsky, an unforgiving critic of American politics, apparently referred to the United States as “the freest country in the world”. Franco Fortini, the communist intellectual and poet, told me this several years ago, and added: “And it is probably true”. On these same pages, however, Keren Batiyov, a Jewish American woman, mentions (on April 8th) being censored by a newspaper in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, which feared “flak” by readers from the Jewish community. And she describes the American “corporate media” as “terribly slanted and biased”. So?

Massimo Parizzi

This is a chance to speak about democracy of and in the media. I think we should separate different levels, though. There is democracy, for the media, when there is no dictatorship: when newspapers are not shut down, when journalists are not arrested. In other words, when the law safeguards the freedom of the press. That's obvious. There is democracy, in the media, when monopolies (such as Berlusconi, or Murdoch) do not suffocate it. And this is obvious, too. It is a freedom of the press which is not at all very safeguarded but, at least (!), people talk about it. Just as people talk about the direct and indirect pressures of political power on the media. And about those exerted by economic powers. And about journalists' self-censorship. And about 'embedded' journalists. And so on. These are great, important matters. But there is another one, too, there is another level too. In the media, the more so the bigger they are, we are observing a transition from the freedom of the press, which belongs to the field of rights, to the *power* to print. That is, to the field of powers. Therefore, it is not possible to speak about democracy of the media without speaking about the filters that decide who and how can have access to such a power, which is the power to speak to the majority. And the news *market* is among these filters, too. It is also the market, or at least a 'slice' of it, (such as the *bullies and thugs* of the Jewish community in Harrisburg mentioned by Keren) that decides who can speak and how.

Those who would like to submit their remarks and reflections on this matter are welcome to do so by sending them to our review e-mail or postal address (massimoparizzi@tin.it; via Bastia 11, 20139, Milano) by August 31st. We will probably publish them in the next issue.

Back to the diaries

Here

notes from the present

Vijayawada, India, January 10th

Carol Faison

I just arrived in Vijayawada (Andhra Pradesh) on Friday evening, January 7th, and yesterday, Sunday, went to Manginapudi and Peddapatnam on Bengal Bay. I walked along the beach to see the situation after the Tsunami. On our beautiful and beloved beach of Manginapudi, where our “Care & Share” adventure started in 1991, practically nothing is left: seaweed and tangled nets. The new small ‘beach’ constructions which were just coming up are all destroyed. On December 26th, 50 people died here. Some bleach powder has been scattered around to avoid infection.

Towering over the beach is a lighthouse built by the British over a century ago. It is the highest place along the coast, hence the least affected. On November 19th, 1977 a tidal wave invaded the local coastline killing around 50,000 people. This is also the reason why the people living along the coastline are still so poor. The proper village is built near the lighthouse. The waves went all the way up to the lighthouse hill, so the village was saved. However the nomad fishermen huts were mostly destroyed. All of the men of the area are either fishermen or they work in the salt fields adjacent to the lagoon area behind the village. The boats were thrown by the waves just outside the village and

many were lost. All the nets are lost.

It seems that the waves were not of the same height and intensity all over: that depended on the depth of the water close to the shores. As Manginapudi is the highest village along the coast, it means that all the other surrounding areas were more badly affected. It was interesting for me to see bullock carts pulled by oxen pulling in the sand towards the shore the boats and remains of boats that had landed up close to the village.

Because Manginapudi was the least affected area along the coast, we had previously decided to give relief to other villages and went to an island called Peddapatnam. Until a few years ago there was no bridge connecting the island to the mainland and there was no school. The village is in the middle of the island. Luckily no one died, but all the fields are under salt water and the crops are destroyed. Most of the boats disappeared and the nets were all destroyed.

We gave our help to the poorest of the village: the Harijans (word which means “children of God”, term used by Mahatma Gandhi for the ‘untouchables’). The Harijans are the most vulnerable people in this situation. We distributed a little bit of everything to 257 families (916 people): rice, cooking oil, aluminium buckets and plates, mats, pieces of soap, shampoo, soap for washing clothes, bedsheets, cooking pots, drinking water, small buckets for washing and bananas. We also donated 6 nets and 4 boats. Besides the distribution, we also brought our medical team with us who gave typhoid vaccinations to 250 children and 75 adults. In the afternoon our dentists treated some 20 patients in our medical bus. As anyone can imagine, the crowd was huge, but they were very well behaved. The Peddapatnam people know us

well and simply waited for their turn with respect. They asked us to repair a wooden bridge which would permit them to go work in fields on the mainland, now that their fields are underwater. They also need a cement platform along the dock, which got destroyed, to sort out their catch of fish once it is brought up ashore. They request other boats, however in this area there are no construction boatyards, just individual artisans who get orders for two or three boats a year, so it will take us some time in order to replace the boats for them.

Al Tuwani, Palestine, January 10th

Operation Dove

In Al Tuwani, south of Hebron (about 360 voters), there was a low turnout: 154 people. Many of the inhabitants of the nearby villages did not take part in the election because of difficult transfers (often on donkey back) or work engagements (subsistence farming), and also because of the many settlements and outposts of national-religious fanatics. Voters from the hamlet of Tuba did not go to the polls, although they wanted to, because of the unsafe road that links the village to Al Tuwani school, where the polling station was. That road is constantly threatened by national-religious settlers, so much that children from Tuba go to school every morning escorted by soldiers of the Israeli army. The presence of some Israeli Jewish women from the 'Mascom Watch' pacifist movement, who went to Tuba asking for the army to protect that road, was of no use. It is worth pointing out the visit of European Union observers, who were at the polling station for fifteen minutes at four o'clock in the afternoon.

Yesterday, January 9th, Palestine voted to choose Arafat's successor to the Presidency of the Palestinian National Authority. Abu Mazen was elected.

Yesterday we went more north to the villages of Thadivenu and Nidamaru. It took about four hours by jeep to get to Thadivenu which is just some 110 km from Vijayawada. On the last half of the way the 'roads' were terrible. The village is connected to the rest of the world by one daily bus. 70 families live in this place. The village is set behind a very long beach of about 3 km. The tsunami waves roared over half of the beach, sucking up all the boats and nets. After the tidal wave of 1977, the government planted along the coast many sea pine trees, to protect the villages. The tsunami brought along its way all sorts of algae and rubbish which is still stuck on the trees. On the rest of the beach there is absolutely nothing left.

One of the most 'profitable' industries of the village is the collection of tiny shells. The villagers burn the shells and make white lime powder which is easy to sell. It takes a load of 50 kilos of shells to make one bag of powder. For each bag the villagers earn 110 rupees (2 dollars). It takes a whole family some two days to collect the shells. All of the work done on the beaches was sucked away and on the beach I did not notice any baby shells left.

After the visit of Thadivenu, we proceeded to the nearby village of Nidamaru. Even though it is on the mainland, it was not possible for the truck to bring the goods, because there are no roads, just sandy paths and a kind of sand 'bridge'. There would be great need of a small bridge. Hence our vehicles had to make many trips to bring in the goods. In Nidamaru there are 105 families of harijans (untouchables) for a total of 417 people. In this village there is no drinking water. Until five years ago there was no water at all.

From the 2005 World-watch Institute report: in the year 2000 wars caused 300,000 dead, a figure that is comparable to the massacre caused in only one month by impossible access to clean water sources and reliable sanitation.

We were told that about a dozen years ago the people were practically tribals with no clothes. Then one of them married an 'outsider' who had been to school and she taught them manners and how to dress. She cooked for all of us during our stay. In those days, not having water, they drank 'todi', which is an alcoholic liquid coming from palm trees. Hence adults and children were frequently drunk.

Five years ago the government dug some six kilometers and laid water pipes to their village. Dirty water from the Krishna river is pumped twice a year into a big pond, where some beautiful flowers grow. Hence the people basically drink muddy water. I honestly don't know how they have survived up to now. Perhaps someone would like to do a research on the phenomenal Indian antibodies! Certainly none of us could survive.

Going away, I noticed a water tank in a nearby village and wondered why it could not be shared by the people of Nidamaru. Upon enquiring, we discovered that the tank is in an area with high caste people who don't wish to share their water with the harijans (with various excuses of course). The villagers told us that their biggest every day problem is to walk one kilometer with their pots to get the 'dirty' water from the pond. This is very exhausting for all of them.

There was no time to meet everyone personally. The most 'hit' family by the tsunami is a family with six small girls. For the last three years the family has been victim of various floods. For some years the father had a shrimp cultivation which got wiped out by high tides. Last year he asked for a loan to start a crab cultivation which got wiped out by the tsunami. Now he has a debt of 2500 dollars, no work and no food.

The lovely outsider lady who cooked made rice

and shrimp. Obviously there was nothing to drink. Luckily we always carry bottles of mineral water with us wherever we go. In all of the village they had four glasses and four plates. No forks and knives. Our staff ate on the ground with their hands - Indian style - on banana leaves. I carry around a picnic box with things which could be useful, like plastic forks and knives, glasses, toilet paper, napkins etc. Despite this I had intestinal problems for a day.

This trip made me understand that in big disasters only governments can be effective. You need airplanes, helicopters and thousands and thousands of personnel to get to people where it is difficult - if not impossible - to get to.

Potenza Picena, Italy, January 14th

Maria Granati

When I am in Potenza Picena, the town where I was born, I happen to be smitten by the sound of voices, by the reflection of the sun on the outline of the hills, by the shifting streaks of the sea, by the smells of grass and flowers, by the tangle of country lanes sticking out white in their harmonious twists against the green of meadows and cultivated land, by rivers appearing here and there in the valley; all this seems, strangely enough, similar to something ancient, almost unchanged after fifty years.

Nature resists the injuries of 'development'. Perhaps nobody will ever manage to cancel the red of poppies in May or the shimmer of sunshine on a river, on a canal and on puddles at sunset after an abundant rain, or the chirrup of insects in Spring, or the feast of blackbirds over cut grass. And yet everything is different. Because what is different is the essence of it all: we seem to have

From "la Repubblica", January 14th. "Under the pressures of the White House, the Congress of the United States last month backed down on an emendation which would have imposed new restrictions to the use of extreme interrogation methods by agents of the American Intelligence. The emendation would have virtually prevented CIA from resorting to torture in the fight against terrorism."

lost that vital fluid, that paste which made our whole life adhere to nature, and which made men and trees, animals, sea, earth and stones all interdependent. And I don't know if it was our poverty, or just poverty, our hardships, having to come to terms every day with all that was missing and the struggle to survive, that rendered our relationship with nature, as well as the exploitation of its resources, so human and wise.

I bless my mother for the way she used water. At home, running water arrived in the fifties: before that, we went to the fountain with buckets and jugs. Though what did not change with waterworks and the convenience of taps was the way we went easy on it. We used rain water to wash things, when there was any; it came down from the gutters and filled up several buckets placed strategically around the house: "the washing comes out better", my mother used to say, and she even managed to use dirty water or lye to clean terraces, floors and the courtyard.

New York, January 15th

Silvio Grignaschi

Is the empire in crisis then? As the plane comes to a halt and you look through the window at the Airport Terminal in New York close scrutiny begins. The Delta Airlines building has flaking walls and the tiles are loose. Inside the building, my eyes (and nose) linger on the old carpet, dirty walls and the smell of mould. The Airline Company is in difficulty and has requested the protection of 'Chapter 11' in order to avoid bankruptcy. All the companies in the USA regularly go in and out of 'Chapter 11' crisis situations, without ever resolving their crippling crises.

And what about the green banknotes? The awk-

Federal bankruptcy laws govern how companies go out of business or recover from crippling debt. A bankrupt company might use Chapter 11 of the Bank-

ward one-dollar bills, which are worth less than our one-Euro coins are such a bother in one's wallet. You can no longer buy anything with a one-dollar bill, not even a canned drink from a vending machine. But is it from cracks in the walls and banknotes that you can understand whether an empire is in crisis?

nptcy Code to reorganize its business and try to become profitable again. Management continues to run the day-to-day business operations but all significant business decisions must be approved by a bankruptcy court.

Vijayawada, India, January 17th

Carol Faison

Another outing yesterday, Sunday. Today we are all worn out due to these long journeys on bumpy tracks. This time we went into two villages situated along the beaches north of Bantumilli. Also here the greatest damage was caused to boats, fishing nets, artesian wells and salt pans. As we were getting there, we went past some 'salt fields' which were spared by waters. A great number of them, instead, were flooded and are now unproductive. The greatest problem for local people is that they have been left without their working tools, and are therefore absolutely helpless, since they do not have the money to buy them again. Upon our arrival, all the village of Padathadika had gathered around the church. I am not Catholic, but wherever we go I find it rather moving to see that the only solid buildings in the villages, and the only meeting-places, are churches (mainly Catholic ones founded by Italian missionaries). Almost nothing has been left of governmental buildings. If priests had stood elections here in the past one hundred years, they would surely have won and maybe, locally, there would be a different situation from the present one! While the lorry was being unloaded and the goods were being arranged for distribution, we went to deliver five new artesian wells. Unfortunately,

only salty water can be found in the centre of the village. Strangely enough, drinkable water can only be found near the sea. So the village inhabitants have to walk about half a mile to go and get drinkable water. We went round the area to see what the impact of the tsunami had been (a first wave had arrived at nine and a second bigger one at midday), then we delivered two boats to the village.

But then there was an accident. The lorries carrying two boats for this village and four for the next one (Varlagondithippa), delivered three to Padathadika by mistake. During the morning the fishermen from Varlagondithippa left by sea to come and get the fourth boat. On their way back, one of them ate what he had brought from home and died outright, maybe of a heart attack. People are very superstitious here, and both villages were panic-stricken.

At the end of the distribution in Padathadika there was a bit of a scuffle: some people said they had not received anything (perhaps they had not been in the village when the 'vouchers' to collect food supplies had been handed out). Since plenty of things had remained, I told the staff to leave all that was left there and get away quickly; let them manage in their own way.

After spending the morning in the village of Padathadika, we quickly moved to a village called Varlagondithippa, some nine km away along the beach. We had several problems to solve there. As I previously said, a fisherman from Varlagondithippa had died on his way back to the village with the boat which had been delivered to Padathadika by mistake. The village had immediately gone into mourning and started the preparations for the funeral and the burning of

the body. Because of the heat, most everyone is burned or buried (depending on their religion) before sunset on the day of their death. Hence the village asked us to “return another time”.

It was unthinkable to return on another 9 hour trip when 50 of us were there ready to distribute 2 truck loads of goods! We did not think that all the families would be in mourning and were sure that most people would turn up - which they did. However it was late and we had to work swiftly. At 4.30 pm the sun starts to set and at 6.00 pm (all year round) it is dark. Since it is usually so hot this is a blessing for the people who live in India, but for those traveling on ruts with no lights, it is very difficult. We needed to leave within 5.00 p.m. to have an hour of light to get to a main road. The distribution was done by the waterside next to a cyclone shelter built in 1977, when a tidal wave hit the coast. We need to return to this village. It's the biggest village we have seen so far and perhaps the prettiest.

Costa Mesa, California, January 17th

Silvio Grignaschi

The California Republic, as its flag reads, is the most densely populated and richest State in the Union. In the latest Presidential Elections it voted for the Democratic Candidate, Kerry, and continues to express, through newspapers and local TV stations, its intolerance of Bush's victory and the 'New Conservative' ideologies. It's not uncommon to meet on the corners of the four-lane streets of Los Angeles groups of demonstrators who try to attract the attention of drivers (very few people walk) with placards against the war and against the President's politics. The Republic of California now feels it is the most-separated

from the rest of the Union on the questions of Abortion and Civil Rights.

Yet.

In a referendum two years ago, the people of the Republic of California threw out the Democratic Governor and elected a Republican candidate: Arnold 'Terminator' Schwarzenegger. All the world reacted with embarrassed smiles at this choice, judged as being naïve and emotional.

Yet.

'Terminator' has launched an intelligent economic recovery plan (the state is on the verge of bankruptcy) and initiated a courageous environmental policy; he now finds himself at loggerheads with President Bush. They have reached the point of conjecturing a 'virtual' ratification of the Kyoto Protocol on the emission of Greenhouse Gases by only one State in the Union.

Yet.

After three years of truce the Governor, 'Terminator', has denied mercy to a condemned criminal who has been on 'Death Row' now for more than twenty years.

Washington, January 20th

Gery Moyano

We worked today. Our office is only three blocks away from the White House. As usual, we left the car in Clarendon car park and took the subway. Surveillance was very conspicuous: surveillance cameras and police officers were everywhere. Coming out of Farragut West Station one could already see concrete barriers on the roads, armoured vehicles and soldiers on every corner, snipers inside buildings and police everywhere, both in squads and in civilian clothes. And all those black cars with darkened windows following you at walking pace. None belonging to common

Today, with the inauguration ceremony, George W. Bush's second term of office at the White House begins.

From "la Repubblica", January 20th. AIDS round the world: 39.4 million sick people (of which 25.4 in sub-Saharan Africa), over 3 million dead in 2004 (of which 2.3 in sub-Saharan Africa).

(common?) people. Plenty of limousines and people in fur coats.

It was even worse at lunchtime. One had to give account of going in or out of one's own building. Sirens hooted in all directions and one could see hundreds people in small separate groups trying to express their dissent. Some of them on foot and some others cycling in groups. They were all photographed. A woman in tears had a ribbon on one arm stating her rejection of a police state, but got lost in the crowds of Texans who had come specially for the event.

From "la Repubblica", January 20th. Economist Wang Jianmao: "I am pestered by multinationals who pay to send their managers here [at the Business School in Shanghai] to study. From IBM to Volkswagen, they all organize their managers' retreats in Shanghai, too".

Vijayawada, India, January 21st

Carol Faison

There is no doubt that Tamil Nadu, which borders Andhra Pradesh to the north, got hit by the tsunami in a greater way - for two reasons. The first is that all along the coast there are tourist resorts and so a lot of businesses have come up and people working in the tourist industries are living close by. The second reason is because after the cyclone and tidal wave which hit Andhra Pradesh in 1977 the fishermen's wisely made their villages a few kilometers from the sea.

Even though not many died in Andhra, most of the fishermen lost boats and practically all of their nets. No one went to help them (with the exception of the area of Manginapudi which is easy to reach), because the coastal areas are very difficult to get to. There are no tourist resorts. There are no proper roads.

Our Indian Chairman Noel Harper came down with typhoid, which he got during our visit to Nidamarru last week. As he was - and still is - bedridden, so I had to carry on by myself. This is not so simple because I do not speak the language.

Fortunately our local staff have been working very very hard since December 26th and have worked with the utmost dedication.

The island of Chinagollapalem is 3 kilometers by 9. When we got to the end of the road, we proceeded by a broken down boat. On the island there are 425 families. There is a small school with one room. The first tsunami wave hit around 9am. The second and worst one came in around noon and they were all huddled in the middle of the island, though 5 died. The sea took away all the sandy beach around the island: about 25 yards all around. Now the coast consists in the roots of palm trees which kept the soil firm when the waves came in. No more beach and no more boats. On the island there is no medical facility. There are no toilets either. We have become quite good in spotting a good bush!

Los Angeles, California, January 21st

Silvio Grignaschi

Tsunami. The whole world criticised heavily the sums allocated for Aid by the American Administration: about 30 million dollars. Less than what was spent for the inauguration ceremony for the second term of George W. Bush. Yet. The large majority of shops, commercial centres, coffee shops, hotels and restaurants continue to collect donations even through public initiatives, posters and videos transmitted on domestic TV channels. All this nearly one month after the tragedy. Television channels have continued to broadcast reports on reconstruction and the problems that are still being suffered in the areas hit. I don't know how much has been collected in donations from private sources. Judging by the extent and diffusion of the support and sensitivity that these initiatives demonstrate, I have little doubt that the fig-

ure must be extremely high. In Italy I cannot remember one single shop or commercial chain with help initiatives still active now, and no longer can you read in any newspaper a report or any information about the aftermath of the tragedy. I would honestly say that Europeans, with the generous help offered by their States, have quickly relieved themselves of a disturbing thought.

Barstow, California, January 22nd

Silvio Grignaschi

Coffee, more so than the Hamburger or Coca-Cola, was the symbol of America and a model for soft drinks. The same 'beverage' with just a vague taste of coffee, the same from coast to coast. Glass jugs always hot and ready to fill the carton cups (or Styrofoam cups if you didn't want to burn yourself) with 'clip on' caps for office workers on their way to work, briefcase in one hand and coffee in the other. And the gentle poking fun at the Italians with their coffees, long, short, with hot milk, with cold milk, laced, Moroccan, etc. "A cup of coffee, please": that used to be enough. There was at least this consolation for the foreigner, not to have to stress himself too much at the end of a meal: probably after wading through a menu difficult to understand and communicate. The coffee shops in the Starbucks chain are very pleasant places, with their intense aromas of chocolate and coffee. You may find and read newspapers and magazines left behind by previous customers. There are chessboards and people in no particular hurry who want to chat or play a game with you. It's just not enough to ask for a "a cup of coffee". There are numerous flavours and mixes (Arabic, Java, Mocha, etc.) together with the 'roasting of the day', and then the 'espresso', short, long, with cream, Moroccan, whole milk, skimmed...

According to the official history of the Company (www.starbucks.com), it all began when Mr Schultz, partner of the founder of the first coffee shop in Seattle, came to Milan in 1983. He was fascinated by the Italians' passion for the various mixes of coffee and the varied ways of preparing and serving it. In less than 15 years more than 8,000 Starbucks coffee shops have opened in America. You find them in out-of-the-way towns and everywhere in the big cities. Starbucks is a very successful undertaking and has risen above the crisis in the fast-food market that has hit Mac-Donald and Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Variety, above all in material culture, is a symbol of vivacity and vitality. After having exported for years a dietary model based on low-level standards, Americans are now able, at least as far as coffee is concerned, to re-invent and discover new pleasures through variety. Yet. When (or if) Starbucks has conquered the world, will we be forced to buy the *same varieties* of Mocha, Java, Arabic, etc. from San Francisco to Naples?

Vijayawada, India, January 24th

Carol Faison

Today we distributed the following to 522 families in Rajarajeswari: 10 kg of rice, 1 mat, 2 sheets, 2 quarts of cooking oil, 2 soaps, 3 pots and pans with lids, 1 steel bucket, 1 steel water jug, 2 aluminum plates, 2 steel glasses, 1 saree to the ladies (with blouse and underskirt), 1 'lungi' to the men (sort of sheet they wear instead of pants or pyjamas). Today it was really hot. I'm really thankful that the tsunami at least came in the winter time. It is difficult to be under the sun so many hours (it takes at least 6 hours to distribute these items to so many people). Some people fainted during the wait and I was afraid I'd get a sunstroke too. The distribution was more difficult today. De-

An absolute audience record, yesterday, for the pop music event Channel V Chinese Music Award: 230 million spectators linked live with Shanghai Sports Hall. It is a triumph for Rupert Murdoch, who owns Channel V.

spite the people could see the huge heaps of things to be donated they were fearful they would not get their turn and there were several stampedes. Some people have told us that what we are donating is just as precious as a 'dowry': what the poor families try to give their daughter when they get married. So it is considered a lot and actually equivalent to what they earn in two months. People went crazy and were shouting and shoving. We were lucky that no one got hurt. Several times I got tears in my eyes: no one would subject themselves to such torture for a bunch of pots and pans if they were not REALLY in need of them. Why are there so many people in the world who have absolutely nothing? Why are the first to lose everything the ones who have the least?

Milan, Italy, January 26th

One of the indications of vitality in a nation is without doubt its language. The 'poiesis' (creation, invention) of new terms and expressions is not only a measure of creativity, but speaks volumes about where we are going, about the feelings that permeate a single people (and the surrounding world that adopts them). Before becoming the slogan of the Congress of the DS in 2000, and even before being the motto of Don Milani's school in Barbiana, in the sixties 'I Care' was the slogan that marked the American pacifist movement and that Welfare policy which still survives in today's Social Programmes (for example 'Medicare', as The State Health Service is called in the USA). 'I Care' is an expression of deep meaning that sums up exactly the opposite of the meaning expressed in the attitude "it's your problem, not mine".

The most recent expression, that possibly expresses best of all the deep social changes tak-

Silvio Grignaschi

One month after the disaster, the estimated number of victims of the tsunami in the Indian Ocean is of 300,000 people.

DS, Democratici di Sinistra (Democrats of the Left), the major political party of the Left in Italy, inspired by Social Democracy.

In 1955 Don Lorenzo Milani, a Catholic priest, opened a full-time school in Barbiana - a small mountain village in Tuscany - in sharp contrast with traditional Italian school classism. The book Lettera a una Professoressa (Libreria editrice fio-

ing place in the years of 2000 in the States, is *Stakeholder*. It means more or less ‘the carrier or bearer (an individual, a community, a social group, etc.) of interests that can be affected by a certain decision’. For example, the social groups that will be affected by the latest reforms in the Pension System that the Bush administration has in its programme. It’s a change in perspective: interest-bearing groups confront one another, measure themselves against one another and with politics; it’s not (necessarily) someone who is responsible to, or worries about another, who ‘takes care’. But actually it is not the opposite of ‘*I Care*’, it hasn’t become “it’s your problem”, rather it has come to mean “it’s a problem of our own”.

Strange that, on returning home to Italy after my trip to the States, that evening, at a convention of the DS, I heard the term ‘*Stakeholders*’ being quoted. I don’t know with what measure of understanding it was used.

Paris, January 27th

How much did you donate for the victims of the tsunami? That is, supposing you all gave something. Surely, you all thought of doing it, if you haven’t done it yet. Someone is still hesitating, others have already decided how much, when and whom to give the money. Some others intended to do it, but then didn’t, without too much wondering why. So far, I haven’t given anything. Zero Euros. Though I thought of giving ‘something’ too; I thought about it in a confused way. I am still at a ‘decision-making’ stage. And yet, I feel I’m very likely to convince myself not to give anything.

It has happened to me before and more than once to experience sudden awakenings of international

rentina, Firenze 1967; latest Edition 1996), written by his students, became one of the reference texts used by students in their protests in 1968. (See Letter to a teacher by schoolboys of Barbiana, Random House, New York 1970, trans. Nora Rossi and Tom Cole.)

Andrea Inglese

The parents of the children killed in Beslan on September 1st 2004 accuse Russian authorities: “They want to cancel Beslan. They have removed the witnesses’ evidences. They are using that tragedy to justify the War in Chechnya and in the Caucasus”. The authors of these denunciations have suffered police searches. A group of mothers and grandmothers were scattered in the street by force. And some bulldozers were sent to destroy the school.

solidarity. As a matter of fact, if I remember well, it was always in connection with the Palestinian cause. I took down a phone number, or an internet address, I put aside the newspaper page showing the address of an organization, and then didn't do anything about it. It may be capriciousness, or stinginess, who knows. I have never tried to shed more light on these fits of mine which lead to nothing. Actually, I don't think I would have any strong objections to make against the idea of sending some money to the Palestinian population, whose miserable life conditions within a political context of patent injustice I have often been able to ascertain through the press. I don't think it would be difficult to single out a serious organization operating in Palestine and able to offer enough guarantees so that the money donated will not be used to pay the very groups that organize suicide attacks against Israeli civilians.

However, the problem here is of another kind. What I would like to justify in an explicit and honest way is giving up the idea of sending even just one euro to the victims of the tsunami. In fact, as I've already written, I haven't made up my mind yet. The offering has not been refused definitely. Several doubts, however, render its statute uncertain and urge me not to shell it out. Therefore, I want to publicly analyze how this solidarity fit develops within myself, thus trying to find some kind of justification for its outcome. I've embarked on this matter because I have the impression of acting and thinking like many other people in such circumstances. The only difference is that this time I really want to understand how I with my system of values function when faced with the request for an offering. It may seem an easy task, but I have the impression of having already got myself into a fix.

I will tread in an erratic way, without expecting to follow deductive progress. The urge for the offering is usually preceded by the realization of a disaster. Have I become aware of what has happened tens of thousands of kilometres away from my home? I'm not sure. At this point, a piece written by Raul Montanari for the book *Scrivere sul fronte occidentale* ("Writing on the Western Front") crosses my mind. Montanari's question was the following: "How much of other people's grief are we able to understand and bear?". Up to what number of innocent victims does our feeling of pity manage to stay as such, without getting lost in the limbo of addiction, dullness or indifference? Our imagination has its limits, and our sympathy needs images. Without images (either verbal or visual) of other people's grief, my feeling is not roused. But certain catastrophes are not referable to simple images. Which images can correspond to the death of one hundred and fifty thousand people and to the hundreds of thousands of people involved in the loss of relations, friends and resources that are essential for surviving? In other terms, how many corpses do I have to see, piled up in common graves, buried under mud, or burning on pyres, in order to be able to fully understand the dreadful gravity of the event? As we all know, the figures of dead, missing, or homeless people are as faulty as all figures, even when they provide exact information. They are abstract. Our mind ends up no longer making a great difference starting from the first thousand dead people. We are somehow able to perceive the progressive gravity of a tragedy, when it is comprised between tens and hundreds of dead. When it gets to over one thousand, our senses start becoming less sharp, our imagination goes round in circles, sympathy gets lost in the open sea of victims.

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sco and Dario Voltolini,
Feltrinelli, Milano 2002.*

Therefore, we resort to images, that is to synecdoche: *pars pro toto*. A single corpse, seen in a photograph or on a screen, will touch me more than the written sentence: "ten dead people". So, here's the game that is triggered off around events such as the tsunami disaster. The singularity of the event does not matter much. The ways in which we approach it, as potential actors in international solidarity, are always the same. The game is well distributed between journalists and viewers. First of all, the gravity of the event must be made comprehensible in 'moral' terms. A cold and detached assessment is not enough: so many dead people, so many missing people, so much damage. It is necessary to make those who are not directly involved in the disaster, those who do not live in south-east Asia and do not have any relatives or friends on holiday there, capable of perceiving the gravity of the event.

As a matter of fact, such an effort to involve the far away spectator is not always made. There are indeed several cases of catastrophes, either human or natural, which, although they involve whole populations of our planet, hardly trigger off the commitment of journalists. In other words, there are catastrophes that do not prompt a description in 'moral' terms. They occur, but remain as if confined to the wretched subjects suffering their consequences. What is missing is a motivation that makes it possible for other subjects, who are far away and alien, to be somehow touched by it.

Also in this case someone has wondered about it frankly. What allowed us, Western people, safely shut inside our little Christmas houses, to follow such an immense catastrophe with an abundance of details? Some will answer: the mere extent of the catastrophe. Then we should immediately

question ourselves about the media coverage of the AIDS victims in the African continent. Has there been on the part of the media the same persistent and systematic attention towards the millions of Africans who have died? Have we seen the images of the burials of people who had died of AIDS? Maybe the extent of the catastrophe is not such a decisive factor, on its own, to trigger off the attention of the media. Others indeed have answered: if some very rich whites hadn't died too, the thing would not have caused such a sensation. That's very likely. At least according to the first programs I used to watch on TV. The news, in fact, were an example of a particular law of international broadcasting. There is no proportion between the time devoted to explaining and commenting a certain number of victims and the size of that number. (The criterion of objective and universal gravity is endangered at once). The latest count of the thousands victims in India entailed an all-screen image of that figure, a series of brief pans on desolate places and, sometimes, live link-ups with the correspondent on sight. The time allowed for images and interviews devoted to the arrival of the Italian survivors at Ciampino airport was equivalent, if not longer. Therefore, the gravity of a catastrophic event is measured, first of all, in terms of *proximity* to those who are *not*, at first, directly involved in it. The Italian coasts did not suffer from the tsunami at all. The latter will therefore seem more serious to the Italians the more it will manage to directly hit some of their compatriots, even though just as unknown to them as the Indians swept away in Madras. The death of each Italian swept away by the tsunami is just as serious as the death of three thousand Indians who suffered the same fate. The further away the victims are, the more they

lose 'moral' significance. A well-known phenomenon, after all.

At any rate, also hundreds of rich western people happened to die, as well as thousands of poor Asian people. (Then we would have to avoid too elegant symmetries: if it is true that the western people who died were not poor, it is also true that among the thousands dead Asians there must have also been some rich ones). Having mixed up Western and Asian corpses, the moral gravity of the catastrophe has somehow radiated to the whole variety of the involved victims. The western people who drowned have come to represent some kind of sympathy relay, making it possible for our sympathy, by means of the Italians and then the Swedes, to reach and brush the corpse of the Indonesian person, whose fate we do not usually care for much.

Though I do not think that it was simply the mere presence of western victims that roused that great media interest and the collective emotion that followed. There were, in a way, many elements that lent themselves to a 'moral' understanding of the catastrophe. Even for AIDS in Africa the same thing could be said. But, being a sexually-transmissible disease in the most economically underdeveloped country in the world, the interpretation it is given is ruled by the ideological perspective of integralist Catholicism and by the implicit racism on which it lies. Negroes reproduce themselves just as animals do: they do not deserve but such a curse. This sentence may sound provocative. It mimics a sentence said by a white South-African woman of western origins, who, with reference to black South-Africans said: "They are breeding like animals".

The tsunami did not spread through genitals, and therefore the integralist Catholic is less prone to seeing it as the consequence of an immorality

of customs. Moreover, the tsunami, just as God, has hit the rich and the poor, thus bringing back a symbolic justice also in our earthly existence. Not only. The tsunami has allowed the rich to feel, in a state of extreme danger, sympathetic with the poor. The white man rescues the black man, and vice versa. God's justice and human solidarity. Moreover, the tsunami has hit between Christmas and New Year's Eve. Right at a time of low consumption. This allows everybody to make a virtue of necessity: after a plentiful Christmas, a moderate New Year's Eve. There will be fizz instead of champagne this time. Furthermore, it is a holiday time and TV schedules usually sink into stupidity. Instead of a *fiction* about Moses, let's watch a *reality show* about the great wave. Finally: at Christmas we usually think about tramps. But in the long run, one Christmas after the other, one tramp after the other, even this solidarity loses its energy. The tsunami has offered us a chance to make an extraordinary offering, thus getting us out of our customary solidarity.

To sum up, a catastrophe is not enough in itself. Neither is the number of dead people. There has to be a series of particular circumstances that manage to make the event 'moral' and, as a consequence, suitable to emotionally involve and excite the spectator who is physically a long way away and safe from any negative consequence. However, the tsunami's cone of emotional light also casts some disturbing shadows. Can there be for us, western people, on average richer and safer than other inhabitants of our planet, can there be - I was saying - a solidarity which is expressed besides the practice of offerings? And besides the 'moral' choreography that stimulates it? Having said that, I do not want to smear offerings. It is still better to finance a sack of

rice thrown from a lorry than the launching of cluster bombs from a bomber. But the word solidarity must also have a meaning which is not exclusively connected with the sympathetic making of an offering bestowed, on the occasion of cataclysms, by the man from the first world to the man from the third world (or from the other world... one is tempted to say), by lifting from his wallet an amount that will not oblige him, in general, to face any tangible sacrifice in his own life habits? One should, in fact, remember that a charitable donation almost always comes up to an amount that will not require any renunciations, if just in the field of our inessentials. One skips three dinners in elegant restaurants and has already raked up more than one hundred Euros to send to Asia. Life carries on quietly, with the addition of the honour of an offering.

Vijayawada, India, January 27th

Carol Faison

We went back to the beautiful village along the coast called Varlagondithippa. 781 families live in this village. It was exactly one month since the tsunami hit. There was a beautiful golden full moon high in the sky. I doubt that the local people will still consider it auspicious to go for a dip in the sea at full moon time (*poornami*). On the beach we saw dozens of fishermen pulling a huge net full of fish (without using boats since they are without) in from the sea. Life has started again. On the trees along the beach the algae brought by the waves are still hanging from a height of six feet. While I walked amid the trees looking for a larger one behind which I could go to the bathroom, I found the body of a huge sea turtle. It was at least a kilometer from the beach. The waves probably carried him and smashed him on the trees.

Hebron, Palestine, January 27th

Operation Dove

At 11.00am this morning, near the Ma'on settlement, South of Hebron, two volunteers from Operation Dove, Monica, Italian, and Michelle, American, were threatened by an Israeli settler from the nearby colony as they accompanied some Palestinian shepherds to their fields. The shepherds had asked to be escorted by the volunteers after having suffered intimidations during the previous days. Today, as soon as the group had been spotted, a settler picked up a big stone and ran after them. As the shepherds ran away, he reached the two volunteers and, holding the stone under the nose of one of them, he shouted: "I'll be back in five minutes; if you're still here, I'll kill you". According to Israeli laws everybody can enter that area (Area C, under Israel's civil and military jurisdiction).

Camisano Vicentino, Italy, January 27th

Mariela De Marchi

A couple of months ago we noticed a tiny greeny-brown insect in one corner of the ceiling. It looked like a bug, but it didn't move. It was too high to make any close observations. A few days later we had completely forgotten about it. Last Saturday, after lunch, my partner called me into the kitchen. "Quick, come and see": a small butterfly was coming out of its chrysalis. It spread its wings with difficulty, poor little thing, then it fell on the sofa. We put it in a box very carefully and started thinking about what we could do. A memory blank threw me into the Internet to check what we could feed it with. Pollen. In the meanwhile, we gave it a bit of water in a jar cap. We went out for a couple of hours and came back with some primulas. We placed the butterfly on a flower, but it looked rather numb. On Sunday it was still like

Today is the Holocaust Memory Day: in remembrance of the victims of Nazism. It was January 27th 1945 when the first Russian soldiers entered Auschwitz concentration camp.

that, motionless. On Monday we tried with a cauliflower leaf: Giovanni had come across cabbage butterflies by sheer chance as he was thumbing through the dictionary. Well, the butterfly started eating up the vegetable with its long green proboscis which kept rolling up and extending. We spent some time watching it, admiring its fragility, the complexity of such a small living being. It had green eyes, a dark green body, yellowish light green wings with purple dots along the top margins. On Tuesday it looked much better! On Wednesday I added a banana: I'd read somewhere that also ripe fruit can be nutritious for butterflies. On Thursday morning, instead, I noticed it was tired and weary. A few hours later it died. I was struck by this small loss, and felt like crying as I showed my daughter the little corpse. She'd grown fond of it, too. Yet, I knew it would happen: wrong season, wrong place. How could it have survived without any sunshine? But for a few days I thought I could save it, and keep it alive for some time. Instead it didn't even manage to fly. And I was left with this slight melancholy.

Saronno, Italy, January 28th

Maria Bastanzetti

Yesterday was the Holocaust Memory Day. These days media have been devoting - and they absolutely had to, of course! - a lot of space to the six million Jews killed in the concentration camps, but with not even a reference, except for very few cases, to the other deportees, the 'non-Jews'. And yet, a great many of them were deported and wiped out exactly as the Jews were, together with the Jews and in the same camps. There were political deportees (among which a million, a million!, Germans who opposed the regime), gypsies (over a million Sintis and Romanies were wiped off the face of the earth), Jehovah's Witnesses, ho-

mosexuals, disabled people, and their names increase the number of the victims of Nazism up to over eleven million. In Italy only, the total number of deportees was almost forty thousand. Less than ten per cent of them got back home. Of those forty thousand, about eight thousand were Jews. The rest were 'political' deportees. Men and women were arrested, tortured and sent to death because of their ideas, because they were anti-fascists, because they wanted people in Italy to be free to think. One of them was my paternal grandfather. His name was Pietro Bastanzetti, and he was arrested in March 1944, after the famous strikes in Milan (the day before he would go underground). His children - who were 6 and 9 then - and his wife saw him again only once, in Bergamo prison, before he was put on a train and taken to Mauthausen first and then to Gusen, a subcamp, where he died three months later. I have never met him, but his example of courage, against a terrible price paid in the first person, has been passed on to me by my father, who is retired today and spends his days taking groups of students on pilgrimages to the death camps and going into schools to talk about what happened. And he talks about all the deportees, not about only half of them. These days people have been only talking about the Shoah. Why hasn't anybody remembered all the others too? Why hasn't anybody thought about them? After all, it would be enough to change a sentence, it would be enough to talk about eleven million victims, instead of six. What's the point in wiping five million lives out of our history?

Abud, Palestine, January 30th

Logan

At 5.00pm today, two Palestinian children, both aged ten, were stopped by soldiers of the Israeli

Today people are voting in Iraq. The turnout to the polls will be 58 per cent.

Army because they were throwing stones. The soldiers shut them inside their jeep for about half an hour, threatening to take them to prison if they did not provide them with the names of their peers who throw stones against the armoured vehicles when they enter the village. The two children came out of the jeep in tears. One of them had given the officer twenty names and surnames of other children from Abud.

polls will be 58 per cent, the party that will win most of the votes, 48.2 per cent, is that of the Shiites of Ayatollah Al Sistani, followed by the Kurd coalition with 25.7 per cent and by the party of the interim premier Iyad Allawi, a 'lay' Shiite (13.8%). The Sunnites abstain en masse.

Vijayawada, India, February 3rd

Carol Faison

Yesterday we gave food and household goods to 500 families who have nothing living in the delta of the Krishna river. Already in August they had lost their homes during a flood and no one had helped them. At a certain point a huge crowd of 150 families came angrily complaining they had not been included in the distribution. They live a little further down. We decided to go visit them next Sunday.

On February 4th the Italian journalist Giuliana Sgrena is kidnapped in Baghdad. She will be freed on March 4th.

Vijayawada, India, February 7th

Carol Faison

At home, here in Vijayawada, I have a nineteen-year-old girl to help me with housework: she was sent to me by Mother Theresa's nuns because she's grown-up, so they can no longer keep her, and they said she works well. Her name's Padma (Flower). She was sent to work for someone by her Muslim parents when she was a little girl and taken to the nuns, who brought her up without giving her any education though. She's intelligent and works hard from morning till night. But she can't read nor write, not even her own name. She doesn't know what her surname is.

According to the results of two researches carried out in the USA by Gallup and Columbia University, and revealed in the last few days, those who have a friend working at the desk next to them are seven times as productive as those who don't. The major corporations are devising strategies to encourage employees to get together.

name. She doesn't know what her surname is. She has no date of birth. She's full of fears: in the past, someone told her about ghosts and devils to scare her. She goes to sleep with one slipper in front of her bed and one behind it, and a sacred image under her pillow. In her mind all beliefs and superstitions are a great hotchpotch. She believes just anything 'learned' people tell her. We are slowly trying to make her understand that there is logic in things, that those things don't exist and she mustn't be afraid of anything. She is gradually getting better. Now she dresses and behaves as an educated person. This is causing her other problems though: at the bus stop, for instance, as she doesn't know numbers, she has to ask passers-by which bus she has to catch and what number is the one coming. Since she no longer looks outcast, people think she is hassling them and don't reply. So, she doesn't want to travel by bus anymore. Besides, not knowing numbers, going shopping is a nightmare for her, because she can't count her change. I'm trying to teach her how to write her name and numbers, and I've just given her a birth date, which we'll celebrate shortly. Her first birthday. So far, she's managed to learn how to write numbers up to 10 (by copying them). But she doesn't know them by heart. Not even orally. Millions people live this way here, with nobody giving them a hand. For most of the people to whom we distributed food and tools it was the first time someone had helped them.

In Thailand Thaksin Shinawatra is re-elected as Prime Minister; "he became rich thanks to financial speculations, and is the manager of the major mobile phone companies in South-East Asia, as well as a tycoon in the television sector with a battleship of national channels, satellites and broadcasting installations".

The budget for the year 2006 has been published in the United States. 150 social programmes, including those for education, healthcare and the environment, have been reduced, while military expenditure has gone up by 4.8 per cent.

Vijayawada, India, February 10th

Carol Faison

On Tuesday 8th we went to a place about three

and a half hours out of Vijayawada, on the south coast in the Guntur District, where the tsunami caused a lot of damage. In the village of Nizam-patnam five people died. Thirty-five families lost their boats and nets and have nothing to live on. When we arrived the tide was out. Nevertheless they were having a good catch: men and women were standing in the water trying to fish with their hands.

They thanked us very much not only for the help they had received, but above all for the way in which we had helped them. They, we were told, had never received anything, but in nearby villages some lorries had arrived with rice, and the sacks had been literally thrown on the crowd. The craftiest and roughest ones had managed to get them, and the others had been left with nothing.

Our staff had been on location twice to talk with the elders of the village and get a list of the families. Each family had been given a card. We always do the same thing wherever we go. Our chief accountant then calls one family at a time, and they all come with their identification card to get what they have been allocated.

We saw a lighthouse three kilometres away and we ventured. We found a fishing harbour with big boats, as those in a cooperative. There was a shrimp factory with women shelling them. Boats came in with fish and crabs that were put under ice alive to be shipped abroad. Near the lighthouse there was an uprooted tree trapped inside a boat: wreckages of the tsunami at four metres above sea level. We bought some fish and ate spaghetti with crab sauce in the evening.

The act of giving

by Roberto Taioli

Here

notes from the present

The act of giving belongs to the kingdom of affections, of intimacy, of those invisible, yet real states of our conscience, to the world of spirit and of human feeling. To offer is to emerge from oneself, a sort of *transcendence*; its course is never established beforehand, let alone traced once and for all. And yet, such a course begins within the author of the gift, and somehow involves the recipient, since it draws and places him/her before the giving subject, even before the act of giving materializes in an offer or in a real object, in the merchandise that reveals itself in the gift. Therefore, giving begins much earlier, with the preparations, with all those gestures and drives, even those tiny operations that are interwoven in it, the atmosphere that brings it into being, and continues in those acts that follow the giving, in the trail of meaning that is left behind, in the scents that are freed and spread, in that tacit and subdued awaiting, in the time of *anticipation*, which cannot be mistaken with the act of reciprocation and giving back.

The act of giving outlines a *new* situation, it cancels one order and foreshadows a new one, though without violence or devastation. It occurs suddenly, though it is anticipated by subtle and deep understanding, by looks, words, silences in a phenomenology of signs, which is at times concealed but effective and at times manifest, in a harmonious combination, by some wise osmosis which

preserves and holds, as in a mirror, our reflection made of all the other images that are within ourselves. However, while in a mirror we take a merciless look at what we *have become*, in a gift we show, in a somewhat confused and irrational way, not only our past, but maybe even more strongly our *open disposition* towards the future. Therefore, giving holds something of a dream, if only because the novelty it brings with it aims at being a negation of the mundane, repetitive and inert, as well as outrageously legitimating the existence of the *unreal*, of a life which does not exist, but which we desire and wish for with all our might. A phenomenology of what is *not-yet*.

Therefore, giving indicates a *state of wanting* and therefore a quest for the truth, which is infinite and which no material gift can either satisfy or fulfil in its singularity. And yet, each gift is also a gift apart, it defines and encloses a time lapse, it is embodied in a moment. Each gift is experienced as *absolute* and *unique*, even though it be neither the first nor the last one, because it is neither measurable nor quantifiable. It has no weight, colour, or shape, but exists within a symbolic insubstantiality, which does not, however, exclude the art of preservation, of safekeeping, of protection. We cherish in that object not the object itself, but the greatness of the person, which extends there in its completeness, as bare, whole and infinite. So, in giving we question the wisdom of sedimentation, the life that is buried, asleep, deposited in that network of signs, scents and voices. Both in the gift we offer and in that we receive what operates is magic, the enchantment of a new world, of a bond that is real, clean, *absurd*, and purer in that. Giving therefore breaks the pattern of a symmetric reciprocity and thrives in the soil of *excess*, since it is itself disproportion, unbalance, non-syntax.

Back to the diaries

Here

notes from the present

Milan, Italy, February 10th

Today the Rumanian father, who usually begs for money outside the supermarket, asked me the most difficult thing of all: he asked me whether I could lend him my car to take his baby back to his home country. The baby was born a few weeks ago and, as the father told me, last night the police evacuated the place where they were living. I froze before such a request and told him I would think about it. On my way back home I wondered if I could have replied differently, and of course the answer was yes: I could have asked him, for instance, how the baby was, where his wife (whom I could remember as being heavily pregnant at the end of December) was, where they were staying after leaving that place. But this simple thing hadn't occurred to me. Now I don't know what to do.

Germana Pisa

Today people are voting in Saudi Arabia for the first time in the history of the kingdom. Half of the members of 178 municipal councils are being elected, while the remaining half are appointed by the government. Women are not allowed to vote.

February 11th. The Senate of the USA approved a reform which will make collective suits against big industries difficult, if not impossible. This reform was one of the main points in George Bush's electoral campaign.

Al Tuwani, Palestine, February 16th

This morning, together with Joannes and Sally, I went near Tuba with some local shepherds: yesterday morning a settler had ousted them from their pastures. At the same time Monica and Diane were with other shepherds from Al Tuwani at about five hundred yards as the crow flies from us,

Logan

From "la Repubblica", February 12th. "Factory workers all over China gather every morning before starting their work shift. They stand at attention and listen to their managers' watchwords.

in the hamlet of Karruba (a group of four caves deserted by the Palestinian inhabitants seven years ago because of the settlers' attacks). At about 11.00am two settlers came out of the wood where their outpost is and one of them fired a shot towards Monica, Diane and the shepherds, luckily without shooting anyone. The other one approached them shouting. Monica and Diane called us and asked for help. We phoned the police and started walking to reach them. We were at about two hundred yards from them when two settlers ran against us. I put my hands up and said, in English: "Shalom, there's no need for you to hit us, nor for us to be hit". I got punched in my mouth. Then the two attacked Joannes, who was holding a video-camera and had his camera slung over his shoulder, trying to get hold of them. Joannes passed the video-cam to me, and I threw it to Sally, who then threw it back to me, until I managed to run away and hide it in a bush, about twenty yards away. In the meanwhile, a settler had his fill of socking, and even showed off with a Van Damme rotating kick on Joannes, who endured it without reacting. When I arrived, he came close to me. I looked at him in his eyes (they were blue) and said: "You can live here without being violent with those who already live here". An elbow hit my mouth. "You live there, and the Palestinians live over there; why can't you live near each other?". A punch in the eye, then a kick near the left temple. "Why do you hit us? It is no good for you nor for us". A kick in the chest, and another, which missed the target, in the private parts. Then they left. One of them, now under arrest, took the camera away with him, and left Joannes lying on the ground in a daze after all that bashing.

Productivity, quality, efficiency... Landing at the airport and looking out of the jet window, you are first welcomed to China by the team of women employees in uniforms, standing at attention before cleaning the aeroplane. I have seen multinational managers flying in from Germany, France and Italy after having survived rashes of strikes cry with emotion." (Federico Rampini).

February 14th. Former Lebanese Premier Rafiq Hariri is murdered in an attack in Beirut. Syria is accused of the murder. Protests against Syria and the Lebanese pro-Syrian government follow. The newspaper "la Repubblica" refers to it as the "revolution of roses" and compares it to the "orange revolution" in Ukraine. Syrian troops will withdraw from Lebanon by April 29th.

Today, February 16th, the Kyoto protocol has come into force: it sets targets for reductions in the emission of greenhouse gases. 141 countries have signed it, not the United States.

The sun was shining today and I went out with my daughter to get some fresh air. Francesca started running up and down the courtyard in front of our house. I took advantage of the situation to take some photos of the industrial warehouse they are building right opposite us. Mine is a digital camera and has a rather powerful zoom. I managed to photograph the men in charge as they directed the laying of a concrete beam clinging onto some cranes. One of them turned round and saw me. Then he climbed down the crane and came towards me. When he got near our gate I was taking photos of my little girl. He asked me why I was taking photos of the operations, and I replied that I liked to keep a record of the changes taking place in the area, that I lived there and photographed all I could see, just anything. He didn't seem to be very persuaded, he said that it was a delicate matter, and who knew where the photos would end up, one never knows... I pretended to be flabbergasted, I told him I was sorry, and that I hadn't even thought about it, that maybe I should have asked for permission, that if he wanted I could cancel those photos. He said he wanted me to cancel them and left. I lied, I won't cancel them. I knew they might get angry, because in those photos you can see they are neither wearing safety helmets nor taking other safety precautions. And since the works started, not only have I noticed that, but I confess I have also thought that if there were an accident, I would be here as a witness with my camera. But these are not the only reasons why I am taking these photos. We have lived in the industrial area of a small country town for three years. When we arrived the warehouses finished at about fifty yards from our house. From there the countryside, the fields, and the trees

From "la Repubblica", February 17th. The Pentagon has started a project called "Future Combat Systems" to manufacture robot-soldiers. A version of it that can fire one thousand shots a minute will have reached Baghdad by April.

started. Then they enlarged the industrial area: the pine trees were swept away, and concrete was welcomed. Then one warehouse called for another one, and two new ones are now ready. And now the one opposite us, the huge warehouse of a chain of supermarkets, has deprived us of half a sunset. I have followed the whole process through my photos, precisely. I wanted to keep a record of the changes in the area. As someone watching a tree grow. Only, this one will not bear sweet fruit.

Bolzano, Italy, February 24th

Operation Dove

Yesterday Joannes Steger [see Logan from Al Tuwani, 16th February] was taken into Bolzano hospital, where his mouth has been shut and his jawbone has been fixed due to the fractures he suffered during the attack. There is still a trauma of the retina and a state of amnesia concerning what happened to him.

Modena, Italy, February 27th

Maria Granati

I have read the book *I doni di Mefistofele* ("The gifts of Mephistopheles"), a short essay by Alberto Fazio. According to the writer, and in the wake of Bateson, Mephistopheles' gift to mankind was speech, verbal language, which irretrievably separated Man - mind, philosophy, logos - from the other living beings, of which he became the master. Fazio deprecates such a division, which, he believes, brought about a loss of those 'pre-verbal' cultures and languages which had lasted for thousands of years and had put Man in communion with animals and nature. The essay is very good, but I cannot understand a few things and I find it difficult to accept some others; for instance, this very separation between

The report by 'Médecins Sans Frontières' about the ten 'humanitarian crises' mostly ignored by Italian media between July and December 2004 has been published. Somalia: 5 million people without any drinkable water or medical care. Ethiopia: 1 child out of 10 dies before the age of one. Liberia: 2,000 victims of fights in the capital. Congo: 150,000 people who have run away to save their lives from other fights. Columbia: 3 million refugees in the country. In-

homo sapiens and the rest of the living world, between Man created in God's likeness, the holder of language, mind, ethics, and philosophy, and the rest of the surrounding world, which only possesses analogical language... between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, different from one another and conflicting. Despite their appeal, these arguments do not convince me.

Last night I woke up at about four o'clock in the morning and could sense a strange soft silence; I looked out and saw it was snowing heavily, as it happens by magic inside those glass globes containing little figures when you shake them and a whirl of tiny white flakes appear; the city below, the dull lights, the trees with their phantasmal shapes. I fell asleep again with that childish pleasure which, I can remember, I felt when I nestled under my bed covers and the northerly wind howled through the battered shutters of my family home. When I woke up this morning I could hear the wind howling, which is not frequent in the Po valley. There was dazzling sunshine, it was terribly cold and the snow had frozen. An extraordinarily rare clear morning, algid and side-real. I would have run into the park, where I usually walk for an hour every day, to enjoy it in the morning; a different light, different colours, solitude, glaring snow; but I was busy. So I went there at six o'clock in the afternoon: the clear morning light was no longer there, but the sunset was wonderful and I came across lots of cold blackbirds; I felt I loved them, together with the chives on which they were hopping, and the first dandelions and primroses heedless of the frost. I looked in surprise at the thousands of different buds, and felt their strength and impatience, the powerful drive towards birth, towards life. I thought about the deprecated distinction between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, and won-

donesia: infant mortality is up to 45 out of 1,000. Burundi: 99% of the population lives on one dollar a day. Afghanistan: 70% of the population does not have any access to basic medical care. Uganda: 80% of the population lives in conditions of total poverty. Tuberculosis: it kills one person every 15 seconds. Over the period taken into consideration newspapers and magazines devoted a total of 949 articles and 'paragraphs' to 'humanitarian crises', of which only 140 are about the above first ten. If we consider that 44 of them refer to Afghanistan and, as 'Médecins Sans Frontières' underline, put great emphasis on elections and military operations, but not on the Afghans' living conditions, the other 9 emergencies received little more than ten mentions each. In TV news, if 'humanitarian crises' obtained a total of 17.5% of television space, the first ten only received 0.002% of it. Iraq occupied most of the television time devoted to international crises (58%), but only 0.5% of that time was focused on the Iraqis' living conditions and on humanitarian interventions. The rest of the time was devoted, in decreasing order, to kidnappings and executions, fights and tensions, effects on Italian politics and military actions.

dered whether it is not just thanks to it that sometimes, as today, I seem to 'be feeling' nature so intensely. Instead, I really do not know what analogical communication between Man and nature is.

Then, once back home, I devoted myself to reading and e-mails, as we all do.

Here is the world

by Jouni Inkala

Here

notes from the present

Here is the world, here are its boundaries.
Raised fists of clouds, skull-white light.

Its laughter. From the beaks of ethereal seagulls
from their cries
from the surface of stones, where time scrapes a perceptible silence.

In this murmur, if this be the only freedom.

Poetry in the 'time of destitution'

by Franco Toscani

Here

notes from the present

There is a kind of devotion (call it passion, or solicitude) that is the mark of poets and thinkers: a consecration to the service of the word, to speech that is essential and speaks most. To the service of what comes as a gift, beyond our possession, and

calls to us, lays claim to us, arriving as a pleasant surprise, unexpected, full of quandaries and riddles: something that stretches unfathomably beyond our scope, yet needs us nonetheless. The only true *allegiance* of poets and thinkers, who “live near, languishing on separate mountains”, as Hölderlin writes in *Patmos*, lies in their utter, willing dedication to the service of the word, to a task without end.

Betraying this allegiance is the true sin, the most serious one. This is why Hölderlin writes that language is “the most dangerous of all possessions”, for we can use it to completely distort what is the essence of man. As everyone knows, we dabble and traffic in language to such a degree that its dignity is often lost or grossly undervalued. If language is the most dangerous of all possessions, making verses, according to our poet, is “the most innocent of all occupations”, a useless occupation, which has no practical purpose, and serves no party or cause. Perhaps it is precisely this uselessness that constitutes its most precious trait, its unimaginable wealth.

So what are poets for, in a “destitute time”, as Hölderlin called it in the 19th century, a troubled and needy time that, *mutatis mutandis*, is still our own? What is lacking, in an era characterised - at least for most of the population in rich, industrialised areas of the planet - by the availability and abundance of material goods and commodities? What are poets for, in a time caught up in the “empty dynamism of the day” (Musil), a time which has no use for poetry, looked on primarily with irritation as a futile dream, an abstract utopia, a load of romantic pap, a failure to act, and so forth?

What are poets for in this time, this crisis in our civilisation’s sense of direction and purpose, in which violence and evil are still, on the whole, the

universal law, in which so many hearts are shrivelled, and idle chatter holds sway as a poor disguise for the lack of meaning in our lives?

In part, they serve to answer the question “who is man?”. This is how Hölderlin begins to offer a reply: “Viel hat erfahren der Mensch. Der Himmlischen viele genannt, / Seit ein Gespräch wir sind / Und hören können voneinander” (“Much has man learnt. / Many of the heavenly ones has he named, / since we have been a conversation / and been able to hear from one other”).

We follow the trail on our own, without necessarily referring and fully adhering to the interpretation of the great poet offered by Heidegger, inspired though it may be. We are a conversation, essentially defined by language. Note well, a conversation, a dialogue, not a monologue: this should be emphasised. It is the dialogue of mortals, whose language reveals to them the richness of their own lives and the unsurpassable boundaries of their condition.

Conversation, dialogue: the fundamental aspect here is *listening*, relating to the other person, to other people, opening up to the world, to the vast field of events. Only through listening and through the ability to connect with others does the ego lose its egomania, does it escape transformation into a totem, a hollow idol.

Listening does not end there, however; it is also - and this is no less fundamental - listening to the quiet voice of fate, to the worlding of the world, to the game of space and time, the consummate game, in which only we can play and be played.

Only from silence, above and beyond the sovereign babble, can the authentic word ring out. The problem of our time lies in the fact that the authentic word - including what Gandhi called the “triple purity” of speech, thought, and action - is

to be heard less and less, and more and more one hears the babble, the empty gibberish that in the ceaseless jangle of mass communication has very little to say that is essential.

A poet, then, is one who gazes in awe on the spectacle of the world, spellbound by the simplicity of its worlding. It is the spectacle of beauty - fragile, ephemeral and precious, as Goethe knew well when he wrote, in one of his *Xenien* entitled *Klage der Schönheit* ("Lament of beauty"): "Beauty asked: 'Why must I perish, oh Zeus?' / 'Why, I gave beauty' answered the god, 'only to perishable things'".

This gift for enchantment, a characteristic of poetry, preserves the natural worlding of the world, letting it be experienced outside the dictates of mere functional, calculating reason.

Girded with wonder, the poet questions the meaning of things. Without resolving the question or the riddle, the poet is the one who, first and foremost, endeavours to look with a pure heart at 'things themselves', and only afterwards will speak. In striving towards some revelation of things, the poet's speech reveals its own nature, as essential speech, and words rise up "like flowers". Through a multitude of images, colours, sounds, pictures, shapes, moods, and facets, the rich *multiversum* of the world unfurls, is unveiled, and we are caught up in an aesthetic whirlwind that enraptures and ravishes the heart.

Thus we try to look at the world with whatever shred of innocence is still left us, and thus the truth is revealed, not only the truth of thoughts and ideas, but of feelings, of warmth, of love. Here human speech is not the knowledge and power of he who rules the world, but an act of naming, an experimentation, by he who protects and preserves, by he who cultivates new possibilities for existence, playing freely in the vast cosmic game, without

giving up on hope and the 'forward dream'.

Receptiveness to the spell of the world, in which it lays itself before us, offering up all of its multiple, complex, and contradictory aspects, does not entail a loss of lucidity, but rather, the awareness that the earth is bitter, harsh, and sweet at the same time. As Hölderlin writes: "... No less indifferent to our wisdom / likewise the rivers rush on, but who does / not love them?"

Poets are those who nurture cultured, refined human emotions, feeling affection, *pietas*, intimacy, and a profound connection with all things, the elements, people, other creatures. As truth expressed rhythmically in the form of song, poetry is a striving towards speech that is essential and speaks most, it is the song of necessity, of the indissoluble connection between life and death, the song of love and pain, joyful and tragic at the same time. There is a fundamental link between poetry and *compassion*, in the most meaningful sense of the word, that of Zen Buddhism, as participation in the world's immense suffering, sharing the joy and pain of all living things.

From this standpoint, rather than idle dreamers and naïve cloud chasers, poets are the most realistic and lucid of mortals. Far from escaping reality, they fully immerse themselves in it, plunging into the 'flesh of the world', as Maurice Merleau-Ponty would say.

Hölderlin was well aware of this when he wrote: "Die Dichter müssen, auch / Die geistigen, weltlich sein" ("Poets, and those no less who / are spiritual, must be worldly"). And Goethe's reply: "A delicate poem, like a rainbow / can stretch only across dark skies; / thus the spirit of poetry / is well suited by some melancholy".

This melancholy is not, however, a debilitating one; rather, it is indissolubly linked to the inexorable stream of life, to which great poetry is al-

ways attuned, even as it endlessly strives to invent reality, to seek out the *novum*, to broaden the range of possibilities.

Mindful of all this, and sensing an unprecedented turn in the relationship between poetry and politics, Octavio Paz wrote: “A new kind of political thought is coming into being, and its creators will be obliged to listen to the other voice sleeping in every man, that of the poet.”

While a new kind of political thought and a new praxis built upon this attentiveness and recognition are certainly possible and desirable, I think it is also true that we are, unfortunately, still a long way from achieving them.

Poetry - though by itself it cannot change the world, and on the contrary, is drastically inadequate - offers no guarantees of metaphysical salvation, but preserves the possibility of a new way for mortals to inhabit the earth, as was Hans-Georg Gadamer’s noble hope in an interview-cum-statement given at the end of the century.

“... und wozu Dichter in dürftiger Zeit?”. What are poets for, then? They contribute to reforging our way of inhabiting this planet, to recovering our unique dignity as mortals and wayfarers. Through speech that is essential, the poet becomes a mediator of and between signs, pointing out what lies gleaming within reach, a treasure that is so close, constantly within our grasp, but due to its very proximity, tends to elude us because of our obtuseness, the stubborn *hubris* of our will to power over things and men.

In an epigram entitled *Wurzel alles Uebels* (“The Root of All Evil”), Hölderlin warned against this *hubris*, in words that should be returned to and pondered time and again: “Being at one is godlike and good, but human, all too human, the mania / which insists there is only the One, one country, one truth, and one way”.

The “mania” has not faded in the least, the evil besetting the world elicits our stunned and irrepressible dismay, the desert is spreading, as Nietzsche’s Zarathustra would say. In this advancing desert, a verse of Hölderlin - a poet who is a friend to all, and whose poetry will prove ever more important in days to come - reminds us: “Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst / Das Rettende auch” (“Where danger is, grows / also that which saves”).

But in our time of “extreme danger” and the mad race called progress, in our scientific and technological consumer society, are we able, and will we continue, to *listen* to the words of poets?

Back to the diaries

Here

notes from the present

Paris, March 1st

Maddalena Chataignier

“Madam, I’m sorry to trouble you, but do you spell *emozione* with an ‘s’ or with a ‘z’ in Italian?” The person calling me is an emigrant I met through the radio station of the Italian community in Paris, which runs a programme on Sunday mornings. Giovanni’s father had been part of that flow of Italian emigrants, back in the thirties, who at time were welcomed with the same traditional suspicion with which Arabs or Slavs are welcomed today. At one point, he had gone back to Italy, but his son was forced to repeat his father’s experience, and has spent all his life here mixing plaster and concrete. He’s old and in poor

On February 23rd, Dionisio Ribeiro was assassinated at the entrance of the natural reserve of Tinguá, in the state of Rio de Janeiro. For years he had been fighting against the smuggling of wild animals and the illegal exploitation of forest resources, in particular of ‘palmito’.

mixing plaster and concrete. He's old and in poor health now; he will never go back to Italy and, perhaps because of this, Ferriere, his village near Piacenza, has become an earthly paradise in his eyes. Rivers flow there, not of milk and honey, but of *polenta*, cheese and ham, such as people cannot even dream of in Paris. Now and then his yearning becomes too strong and Giovanni gives me a ring in a language, that is almost incomprehensible, except for those like me who have one foot on this side and the other foot on that side of the Alps. He tells me about the folk-dances in his youth, the rice fields where he went to help rice-weeders, and about the songs they sang together - "some of them cannot be repeated, they're not suitable for a lady!" - and he invariably ends up telling me about when he went fishing on lake Mu - does it really exist, I wonder? - full of leaping trout [*trotelle* in Italian], or better of *trottole* [the Italian word for whirligigs. *Trottole* is a distortion of *trote* - i.e. the correct Italian word for trout - used by this unlearned old man who has lived in France for too long], as he says every time, overwhelmed by his own enthusiasm.

February 25th was the 'Work Your Proper Hours Day', announced by the British Trade Union Confederation as a protest against the ever-spreading phenomenon of 'super work': not paid-for over-work which does not appear in the pay envelope, but that every worker feels he has to do.

Vijayawada, India, March 1st

Carol Faison

I am going back to Italy this afternoon for my daughter's degree. Her thesis is on children in young offenders' institutions in India. She spent two months here last summer to do research and talk to convict children, guards, directors of various prisons, local authorities, associations defending children's rights. Then I'll come back to India.

A few days ago a new Family Code was approved in Algeria, which maintains heavy discriminations against women. In particular, the obligation to be represented by the 'wali', or legal guardian (usually the father, a brother or a judge) at the stipulation of the wedding agreement, the obligation of obedience to the hus-

Last Thursday, February 24th, we went back to the coast. We left early in the morning and when we

got out of the car, which has air-conditioning, we found out that the temperature outside was 120 degrees Fahrenheit! The first day of terrible heat. So our day was more tiring than we had expected. First we went to Nidamaru, where we inaugurated the school reconstruction works.

The heat has now diminished a bit, but, as I am writing there are 93 degrees in my air-conditioned office with! They tell me it is still very cold in Italy. I don't think I will mind at all!

Camisano Vicentino, Italy, March 5th

We rush into the supermarket to get some cassettes for the videocamera. Once we get to the right department, I notice a lonely pram with a baby crying in it. We can't find what we're looking for, so we have a closer look among the maze of products just to be sure, but there isn't anything. In the meanwhile the baby keeps crying. Near us a man is hesitatingly flipping through some books, while another one is plunging into an ocean of CDs, and shop assistants are running around in the usual Saturday evening hustle and bustle. It's time for us to go, but I can't ignore that incessant crying. I look round: not a soul wrenches his or her eyes from the shelves and offers. I look into the pram. He's a really tiny baby, and must be about two weeks' old at the most! He keeps crying, starving and furious, and there's no sign of his mother. I call my partner and we wonder what to do. No other customer comes near, no one seems to have noticed our problem. We stop those who are the closest to us and ask them if they know anything about the mother: nobody's seen a woman around. Where's she gone? We call a shop assistant and inform her of the situation. The

band and the possibility of asking for a divorce, unlike the husband, only for very special reasons: the man's impotence or his absence without reasons for a year.

Mariela De Marchi

From "la Repubblica", February 26th. The number of recruits in the Marine Corps is going down, and in 2004, for the first time in ten years, it went "below the required amount of fresh blood" (sic). The year 2004 also was a "record year" for suicides in the Marines: 31 successful ones and 84 attempted ones. More than the Navy, the Air Force and the Army, the Marines are corps made up of extremely young people: 6 out of 10 are less than 25 years old and almost 2 out of ten are under twenty.

February 27th. Elections in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Among vote rigging, crushed protests, the arrest of opponents, the closing down of newspapers. The opposition has adopted the colours,

girl leaves and makes an announcement over the loudspeaker. I move the pram a bit to calm the baby down. In the meanwhile I start observing and speculating. The pram isn't flashy, but not shabby either. There's even a handbag, a rather old one, hanging from it. The little one is well-dressed, the blankets look new. Perhaps the mother has left the bag there empty to fool people and run away unnoticed. Perhaps someone has given her the pram and the clothes as a present, although she hasn't got much money, judging from the tatty bag. Deep down my maternal instinct is crying out, and it hurts me to think of this abandoned little one, poor one; I'd take him home with me, I'd be happy to adopt him, and I can already picture myself feeding him... The shop assistant comes back angry: "We'll see now, let's hope that mother comes back, if she's around; how is this possible!". A few seconds later a woman turns up in a hurry saying "it's mine! it's mine!" and grabs the pram. She'd forgotten it. We all let out a sigh of relief. "Well" a customer says knowingly "some people forget shopping trolleys, and apparently there isn't much difference". There's always someone ready to grab someone else's trolley, though... As we're leaving we can see the woman standing in front of the salami counter with the baby in her arms. Her husband says "honestly, Stefania!" with an expression of outraged scandal, and she replies "don't tell me anything". Their older daughter, about eight, is looking away with a half smile.

Varese, Italy, March 5th

Children watch TV in the morning, before going to the kindergarten or to school, while their parents are getting ready. It may be unavoidable

orange and yellow, of the revolt that brought Viktor Yushenko to the government in Ukraine, last December 26th. In Kyrgyzstan, where the opposition has obtained only 6 seats out of 75, violent protest demonstrations have followed the vote, and on March 10th ten people die. On March 24th the Supreme Court annuls the elections. On April 2nd President Askar Akaiev, escaped to Moscow, resignes.

February 28th. A kamikaze explodes himself in the middle of the crowd in Hilla, Iraq. 130 dead people. Attacks against civilians, besides those against soldiers and policemen, occur practically every day in Iraq.

From a survey carried out by the Swiss bank UBS on purchasing power round the world: a Big Mac costs 10 minutes' work in rich countries, but 3 hours' work in poor countries.

Paola Turrone

March 4th. Giuliana Sgrena, the Italian journalist

ents are getting ready. It may be unavoidable, there may not be safer places where they can wait. All sponsors know that. During the TV morning, one of the favourite viewing times for broadcasting cartoons, advertising is devoted mainly to *baby products*. Not only during *children's programmes*, but also between one news programme and another, so that nothing is missed out on, not even on the part of the parents on their way out, who are informed and make up their minds as for what to buy. That's how they nail our life down on escalators in shopping centres, and describe our gestures to us by fabricating our desires. In the morning the main topic often is the afternoon snack. In a commercial transmitted a few months ago, a mother walks into a living room and sees her children sitting in front of the television eating. She has a vision: her own children sitting on the sofa in front of the television have become obese. She decides to change their snack completely by offering them an alternative to what they are nibbling: strawberry-flavoured chewing-gums with the words *more sport, fewer calories* written on the packet. The children get up from the sofa enthusiastically and throw away the remote control. They suddenly become aware that they have to do *more sport* and take in *fewer calories*. That's how one can learn from an early age that one must read the number of calories on packaging! By offering products in this way we actually convey the 'culture of thinness' and not instead an alternative way of sharing our time. The recipient of this advertisement is the parent, and the commercial is presented as advice to those who are in charge of dispensing food. Very often, though, the commercial that follows happens to be addressed to children; in a picaresque style, and through some incredible

of "il manifesto", is freed. On the way to Baghdad airport, soldiers at an American check-point fire against the car in which she is travelling, injuring her and killing Nicola Calipari, an agent of the Italian secret services. This is what often happens to cars of Iraqi civilians.

adventure, it promotes a breakfast based on croissants. Such a conflict is anticipated, required, induced by the medium that conveys the message. That child will ask for a chocolate snack and his mother will hand him a packet of chewing-gum, having to provide him with a convincing explanation: you can't possibly get fat. Such an imperative finds its origin in a widespread social alarm, i.e. infant obesity, which has been invading our national press for at least a year now. Plenty of nutritional advice is given, under the ever-present imperative *more sport, fewer calories*. But infant obesity has nothing to do with food, with good looks, and yet everybody keeps substantiating it in these terms. Infant obesity is the disastrous and painful symptom of a decaying society, since when children are lonely, bored, unheard and motionless, it means there is an absence on the other side, that there is not a society that takes care of them, of their joy, their protection, their growth, their learning. Children are alone in front of our TV sets and fill themselves up with all this absence.

New York, March 5th

Benedetta Scardovi

When I first came to New York I wondered why everybody, men and women, went round with such bulky bags or backpacks. Now I find myself doing the same thing and I know why: distances are so big and moving from one side to another of the city is so exacting, that people take advantage of the Subway journey from home to work to read, write, study, make up and have breakfast. It would be unconceivable to waste all that precious time just travelling, and more so to think of going back home if you forgot something.

The other day I gave a Power Point lecture, or show, or whatever you like to call it, about my experiences in Palestine last October and November [as a pacifist volunteer]. It was to a group of Christians belonging to the Baptist Church. This time I took the liberty of showing them all of my 158 slides - in previous shows I had had time restrictions. The slides were projected on a white wall inside the Baptist Church; afterwards we gathered in a church annex. My audience consisted of men and women between 18 and 70, and no one left after the slide show. For almost two hours I realized they were an attentive audience, and they sometimes asked me lovely questions: "Weren't you afraid?", "Did you feel at ease with the Arabs?". "Oh, what beautiful children!", they said, looking at my photos. One of the Baptists asked: "Did it matter to the Palestinians that you were there?". His question was full of concern for the Palestinian people, I could certainly tell that. After the first hour I asked them whether they could stand any more. But they just wanted to go on, and not out of sheer politeness. Afterwards we had coffee and nice home-baked cakes. And then my audience wanted to be even further enlightened. My earlier shows had been for leftwing political societies, where, I'm sorry to say, the need of 'enlightenment' about the situation in Palestine didn't quite match that of the Baptists. The Baptists didn't try - as some of the left-wings did - to foist their own based-on-nothing opinions on me. The feeling the left-wings had given me was that they already knew everything. We had usually had a short discussion, and I noticed then that most of the young people left before it started. I biked home in the silent snowfall.

In Istanbul the police attack a demonstration organized for March 8th, Women's Day.

Does the Left already know everything?

Here

notes from the present

Let's pause for a moment - as I believe it is worth it - on what Flemming says: politics believes it already knows, while religion doesn't? It seems to me a paradox. Isn't religion a vision of the beginning and of the end, and from the beginning to the end? And isn't politics, instead, a project? Shouldn't it be the other way round then? Shouldn't religion be the one to believe it already knows, while politics the one in need of knowing?

Massimo Parizzi

However, maybe it is not true that the Baptists Flemming talks about, in their turn, do not 'already' know. Perhaps, when faced with the suffering of 'their fellow men', they probably have a ready-made answer, too: a range of feelings (emotion, mercy...). "Oh, what lovely children!". This is a response which requires a question that anticipates such a response: the 'bare' sight of suffering. The cross. It is the dialectics of humanitarianism. Maybe, at a political debate on the situation in Palestine, those Baptists would have been the ones to stand up half-way through the debate and leave. Or to not be able to find the words to talk.

The 'politicians' whom Flemming showed the same photos, are, one would say, different. They're left-wings (like me). Maybe, probably, Marxists or with a Marxist background. Not very prone to emotion, which, rather, they distrust. Do they distrust it because they distrust the pair suffering-emotion? That uneven relationship between

the sufferer and the moved one, a relationship which always risks self-perpetuation? That would be reasonable. It could be understandable. However, why do they give the impression of already knowing everything? I believe many of us have had such an experience as Flemming's. Why does the Left often give the impression of already knowing everything?

I am submitting these questions, or better this cue, or prompt, to all our readers. Those who wish to accept it and contribute to the discussion may send their remarks and reflections to the review e-mail or postal address (massimoparizzi@tin.it; via Bastia 11, 20139, Milano) by August 31st. We will probably publish them in the next issue.

Back to the diaries

Here

notes from the present

Jalalabad, Afghanistan, March 9th

Graziella Longoni

It's evening and I'm in Jalalabad, the first Afghan town one reaches coming down from the Khyber Pass after crossing the border with Pakistan. I came here from Peshawar, a Pakistan border town where thousands of Afghans refugees have fled over the years, escaping from a country deeply scarred, in the last twenty-five years, by incalculable, interminable violence: first the Soviet invasion, then the bloody conflict between

the various factions of the mujaheddin, followed by the obscurantist repression of the Taliban regime, and finally the American war on terrorism fought on Afghan soil. In my heart I carry the painful tales of the refugees I met in the Jalozi camp, which stands on a bleak, barren plain near an enormous brick factory where even widows and children work for two dollars a day.

The trip to Jalalabad was grueling, about seven hours' march, struggling up and then down a winding, devious road that snakes through the ridges of the Hindukush mountain range, the backbone of Afghan geography. I crossed through the tribal areas, a sort of no-man's-land between Pakistan and Afghanistan which the Pashtun defiantly call Pashtunistan to underscore their political autonomy. Here justice is dealt out in accordance with the dictates of the ancient tribal code (Pashtunwali), a harsh, inexorable code, much more severe than even the Sharia (Quranic law), which places primary importance on the defense of honour and the right/duty to seek vengeance to redress offenses. Near the Khyber Pass, a bellicose symbol underscores the infinite distance separating this place from the state and its laws; two rifles drawn on the rock face greet you with the following words: "Khyber Pass rifles welcome you". There can be no stops on the way through this insidious world, which must be crossed under the protection of a bodyguard armed with a Kalashnikov; one can only pass through. The landscape around us is achingly beautiful. A bright, limpid sky kindles the reddish tint of the lower-lying stony mountains, and brings out the pallor of the more imposing ones; barren, desolate plains, sometimes interrupted by groups of humble mud houses, de-

lineate a mysterious, disquieting space; in wider valleys, rushing torrents feed fields of vegetables and opium poppies; in this immense, intimidating solitude, one can glimpse the vivid clothing of the Kuchi nomads, small groups of women and children driving sheep and goats to pasture at the risk of being blown to pieces by the many landmines which infest the area, as one can see from the presence of several mineclearers who move cautiously under the weight of their protective suits, adding to the almost surreal appearance of this extreme environment.

With these images still in my eyes, I arrive in Jalalabad, the capital of the Nangarhar province, where the Kabul and Kunar rivers meet. Close to the tribal areas, which are a hideout for Taliban and al-Qaeda groups who often make raids to attack American soldiers and their allies, the city is not safe. A traditional patriarchal mindset and religious fundamentalism are fairly deep-rooted here. Women walk along the streets hidden under heavy black chadors, or completely erased by *chadri* (burqas). At the entrance to the Spinghar Hotel, a crumbling building where we are to spend the night, a plaque on the outer wall, placed there on 19 November 2001 by Afghan journalists to commemorate foreign colleagues who lost their lives in Afghanistan, lists the names of Maria Grazia Cutulli (Italy), Julio Fuentes (Spain), and Harry Burton (Australia). In the lobby we see only bearded, turbaned men who seem to be monitoring our every movement.

I belong to a group of ten women, on a delegation to Afghanistan to support RAWA and OPAWC, secular, democratic Afghan women's organizations which strive, at their own risk, to defend women's rights to education, healthcare,

and work, and children's rights to a future where they can live in peace and safety. The atmosphere in the hotel is oppressive. It's almost instinctive for us to cover our heads with heavy veils to try to pass unobserved.

Kabul, Afghanistan, March 10th

Graziella Longoni

I am back in Kabul two years after my first trip here, and I am very curious to see if anything has changed. Perched 1800 metres above sea level, Kabul looks like a ravaged city: everywhere are gutted buildings, huts riddled by bullets, bombed-out structures, filth, open sewers running through the gutters, insane traffic, dented yellow taxis piling in dozens of people with the women riding in the trunk, and above it all, a thick, greasy dust that fills the air, turning everything grey and grimy, a dust that reddens your eyes and gets into your nose and mouth, irritating your throat. There are many beggars on the streets, almost all of them disabled children and widows covered in dirty, worn burqas; some of them risk being run over by the cars, sitting on the ground in the middle of the road with their youngest child lying on a wretched little mat, stretching out their hands, uncowed by curses. Rarely does one encounter women with bare faces; the *chadri* remains the tragic uniform they are forced to wear if they wish to move through public areas safely, that is, without the risk of being assaulted or insulted.

Despite these familiar scenes, Kabul has changed: there are large new houses protected by armed guards and high walls, belonging to officials, politicians, rich merchants, and some of the warlords; modern buildings meant for shopping

March 10th. A kamikaze explodes himself in Mosul, Iraq, inside a Shiite mosque during a funeral. At least 46 die.

centres, banks and offices, well-stocked supermarkets, internet cafés, beauty salons, restaurants, and shops selling all sorts of things. Kabul has become one big construction yard, but there are no signs of anything being built for the working class and the refugees, who are returning to wander the streets, homeless. The massive influx of Westerners has also triggered rampant inflation, with rents sky-high and everything costing an exorbitant sum.

Today in the Afghan capital, two days later than the rest of the world, RAWA, a women's organization forced to operate in semi-secrecy, celebrates International Women's Day for the first time, and we also take part, to bring our greetings and our solidarity. It's thrilling to see the hall overflowing with women of every age, barefaced and in the company of many men, listening to the addresses of the female speakers attentively and with keen engagement. I am deeply struck by the words of young Sohaila, who works among the refugees in Pakistan in women's literacy courses and in the orphanages, which are run according to an enlightened foster home model. "If a country lacks the courage to fully come to terms with its past, it won't even be able to begin to hope for a future. We must remember and denounce those responsible for the destruction of Afghanistan, refusing the false logic of an immoral reconciliation effort which transforms butchers into heroes; this is the only way for our time to escape the snares of a false democracy built on blackmail and fear." It is a lucid history lesson I won't easily forget. I am also very moved by the lines of a poem recited with great emotion by a woman of the Hazara, an ethnic group of Mongolian origin and Shi'ite

religion, harshly persecuted by the Taliban, who are of Pashtun ethnicity and Sunni religion. “Even if they have destroyed the flowers / they cannot root up the spring. / Even if they fight and kill us / we women will still live on”. I go on my way, thinking what enormous courage and what enormous self-respect it takes to survive in a subverted world where a woman is worth less than an animal.

Kabul, Afghanistan, March 11th

Graziella Longoni

Accompanied by Nuri, the financial director of HAWCA, an Afghan NGO which carries out humanitarian work focused especially on women and children, I visit a shelter for women who have been the victims of violence inside and outside the family. There I meet Halima, a young woman of twenty, who arrived at the shelter with a broken back, a bloodied body, and in a delirious state. Forced into prostitution, as the property of different men who ferried her between Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia like a piece of merchandise to be sold to the highest bidder, Halima cannot even manage to tell her story: memories are jumbled with fantasies, and no one really knows the tragic course of her existence. There I meet Hasisa, a fifteen-year-old girl forced by her father to marry a fifty-year-old man with a wife and children; Hasisa managed to flee Herat and arrive in Kabul, where she was found by the police in a pitiful, confused state and sent to the shelter by the Ministry of Women’s Affairs. Zeba, a woman of about 25, also fled from a husband who beat her savagely, bringing along her two children; she was pregnant at the time of her escape and she gave birth in the shelter. Another

From “la Repubblica”, March 11th. The number of people who have contracted malaria in the world is about 515 million, of which 344 million in Africa. Anti-malaria treatment costs 14 euros per person.

young woman plays silently with her two children, and another girl sits on the bed next to Hasisa, holding her hand. The heart-rending nature of their suffering takes my breath away; I hug them, weep, and they comfort me by caressing my eyes, taking my hands and kissing them as one normally does with an older person to show respect. The shelter is an anonymous building, surrounded by a high wall, protected by an armed guard, and located in a secret place; the guests cannot see anyone and cannot have any interaction with the outside world, shut in as if they were in prison, for reasons of safety; during the day they attend a literacy course and do a bit of work to fill hours that would otherwise be empty.

In Afghanistan, women who have been victims of violence and have dared to rebel and escape are forced to hide, to disappear, to give up all their emotional ties in order to avoid prison, which would be an even more traumatic experience. According to the patriarchal laws sanctioned by the Sharia, which the new constitution does not actually abrogate, the criminal is not the man who beats and rapes a woman, but the woman who, by trying to escape this abusive relationship, breaks with the established order and therefore deserves the harshest of punishment (stoning, repudiation, prison). Indeed, a recent ruling by the Supreme Court, whose role is to ensure that the Constitution is applied “with respect for the sacred religion of Islam”, established that the law allows the imprisonment of women who have committed the “crime” of running away from home to escape sexual abuse or a forced marriage. Afghan women are therefore the victims of profound institutional schizophrenia: on the one hand, the Constitution declares that “it is the State’s duty to protect

women's physical and psychological safety within the family"; and on the other, the "sacred religion of Islam", in its most fundamentalist form, legitimizes the abuse endured by women in their families and punishes them when they attempt to escape their torturers. The shelter is the government's attempt at mediation, to help women without calling into question the Sharia, according to which they are not people with rights, but the property of men who have the power of life and death over them. For this reason, the shelter is set up like a penitentiary: the woman who enters it is forced to cut off all relations with the outside world, accepting the inhuman verdict that deems her guilty. Halima, Hasisa, Zeba, and the other women have escaped prison, but to stay alive, they must disappear from the world, becoming invisible, vanishing into the shadow of a shelter which protects them without changing the traditional mindset of their men, who still do not understand why abusing a woman is a crime and not a right.

When I come out of the shelter I feel drained.

Farah, Afghanistan, March 13th

Graziella Longoni

I reach Herat by plane, flying over the Paropamisus mountain range, the western branch of the Hindukush. The view from above is glorious: a blinding succession of snow topped peaks gleaming in the sunshine, and then barren plateaus and endless plains which dilate your perception of space. After the airport begins the long, exhausting journey to Farah, the capital of the province that goes by the same name, in the western part of Afghanistan on the border with

border with Iran. An eight-hour drive along an impossible road, constantly interrupted by mines, rutted by deep pits, wiped away by violent torrents that must be forged at full speed to keep from getting swept away or stuck in the mud. We travel along with great difficulty, looking for safe routes through fields and rocky terrain in a breathtaking landscape where the desert meets the mountains; here and there are villages of humble mud huts with domed roofs, where the water, when it comes gushing up, makes everything muddy, and long lines of dromedaries slowly trudge in the distance. Every so often we meet someone who sits in silence on an isolated boulder and looks at the sky, watching the movement of the clouds scudding across it. We can't stop because the area is patrolled by bands of robbers and by militiamen in the service of some warlord; we have to keep moving on and eschew every minor comfort.

We arrive in Farah at dusk and are greeted with immense joy by the women of RAWA and their supporters, who have been worrying about us all day. Their hospitality is truly moving, full of kindness and discretion; all the best things they have are for us. We are enveloped and sheltered by their great desire to communicate, despite the language difficulties, and a warm, respectful affection. In the evening, under a sky strewn with stars and lit by a horizontal sliver of moon, we all gather together, men, women, and children, in the small inner courtyard (*funduc*) of the house, enclosed by a wall to protect the women from the eyes of strangers, as is the custom in Afghanistan. We talk about ourselves, our families, our children, our work, answering the questions of the more uninhibited ones and drinking *tchai* (tea) by the litre. Omar and Hassan, our young body-

guards, who have nothing military about them, watch over us carefully, joking with us and letting us take photographs. There's an atmosphere of friendship and great familiarity, as if we had always known each other and were back together after a time apart. Before retiring to bed, we talk about Malalai Joya, the pride of Farah. She is a young social worker, twenty-four years old, who is an elected delegate to the Loya Jirga (national assembly). During a plenary session (in January 2004) for the ratification of the Constitution, she dared to say that many warlords (Fahim, Rab-bani, Dostum, Sayyaf) do not deserve a seat in that assembly because they are criminals, and should be brought to trial by an international court. Having received death threats, she was protected and defended by the women of Farah, newly literate and aware of their rights, who marched out to demonstrate on her behalf, and are now fighting at her side to promote the change of mindset needed to achieve social justice. Tomorrow we will meet with her.

Farah, Afghanistan, March 14th

Graziella Longoni

We set out early for the village of Rokhin, to visit the Danish School run by RAWA and attended by 150 girls whose parents are apprehensive about sending their daughters to the public school - which is often impossible to reach, and also happens to operate poorly and patchily - because they fear the threats of Islamic fundamentalists who often attack girls' schools and set fire to them. They greet us, reciting poems and singing songs that celebrate the love of the Afghan people for their homeland (*watan*). It's lovely to see these attentive young pupils, who feel important because they have learned how to read and write,

and who do so with pleasure; it is moving to hear them speak English to try to communicate, to establish more direct contact with people who have come from afar and who live in another world. Later on, after drinking *tchai* and eating sweets, pistachios and raisins with the women who run the school, we go down into the courtyard where the village chief is waiting for us, accompanied by a dozen elders who are recognized as wise men. He is a tall man with a regal bearing, an intense face, and light-colored eyes, come expressly to welcome us and thank us for tackling such a difficult journey to arrive in Farah, refusing to be intimidated by the risks. Together we will go to see the three canals RAWA has repaired to bring water to over forty thousand people and to irrigate the fields, so that many villages can grow wheat and vegetables. Under the scorching sun we listen to this proud man tell the tragic story of his country, from the Soviet invasion to today, expressing his concern about the current political situation, which ensures neither security nor democracy. I am struck by his lucidity and impressed by his ability to bridge the past, present, and future. "If we want a world of peace," he says firmly, "we must not forget that Afghanistan is part of this world. We must disarm the warlords, who also happen to entirely control the opium trade; we must bring them before an international court for the crimes they have committed. They are the true enemies of peace, the ones who hide terrorists and sell our country to the interests of foreign powers who only care about using Afghanistan for its important strategic position in the heart of Asia. Help us in our vigil, and above all, do not forget about Afghanistan, which now risks being plunged again into chaos. Keep talking about my people, do not leave us on our own." These words fall like

stones, and cannot go unheeded; they are words I have heard more than once in the observations of many people we talked to.

But in the West, Afghanistan is no longer in the headlines: we are supposed to believe that the war against the Taliban has freed women from the slavery of the burqa, that the country has equipped itself with a Constitution and is heading towards democracy; above all, we are supposed to believe that war brings peace and that the type of intervention used in Afghanistan is a model that can also be exported to Iraq, and wherever else they go to fight pre-emptive wars to help oppressed people build a future. I will have no part in this depraved, immoral game; with the words of a witness who has seen and heard for herself, I will tell anyone the other truth about Afghanistan: this is the only way for me to remain close to the women and men I have met here, and to walk with them on a path which places primary importance to everyone's right to live in peace, free from poverty, fear, warfare, and fundamentalism.

Abud, Palestine, March 15th

Julie

It's about half past four. Someone knocks at the door. It's a boy warning us that there are three jeeps of soldiers in the village. We quickly go down in the street with him and in a few seconds we reach the spot a few yards away from where we live. A small square in front of the mosque is occupied by two jeeps and a hammer. As soon as they see us (we are about ten yards away from them, motionless), the soldiers approach us pointing their guns at us. There are two of them, one with dark hair and skin, the other one reddish-headed, with glasses and officer stripes on his shoulder-straps. This latter comes forward

March 16th. George Bush appoints Paul Wolfowitz, an exponent of the New Conservatives, as the head of the World Bank.

quickly and yells at us to clear out. In a few seconds he reaches us and warns us not to take photos: C. is filming everything. The officer starts jostling her. He's beside himself. We ask him to calm down, but he closes in on us. He wants our documents: according to him we are hindering a military operation. His comrade repeats everything more calmly. Tension is high. We keep our point: we remind them that we are just watching and it would be illegal to take away our video cams and camera. The officer takes P.'s passport anyway. Behind him another soldier arrives who manages to calm him down a bit and take him away from us. Then, slowly, they all go back to their vehicles and leave. We stop there with other people present: children, women and two old men. We ask a few questions in order to reconstruct the event. But immediately other children come to call us because the jeeps have just moved uphill, along the road leading into Abud. We can see them, they are about fifty yards away from us. They have lined up again and are pointing their guns at us. Even though we do not move towards them, they warn us not to get close to them. We stay where we are: C. is filming and P. rings the person responsible for this district on behalf of the OCHA (the United Nations' Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs). Three soldiers suddenly move towards us. They are determined and quick and come towards us. The same ones as before. The red-headed one gets close to us. He wants our documents. He starts searching us and takes our passports and door keys out of our pockets. He puts everything in his pocket. We protest, as it is absolutely illegal. The soldier sniggers and gives P. just a bottle cap back. He seems to be leaving, but then changes his mind. He also wants the camera. He forces my hand to take it away. Under his grasp I'm forced to let him take it. But P. is still holding on to it

from the strap. The soldier pulls. He pulls violently, and almost brakes one of P.'s fingers. In the end he manages to get hold of it and goes back to the jeep with his comrades. A few minutes go by. Machine guns are still pointed at us and at the other people present: people like anyone else, who just happen to be in the street at that time. In particular the children behind us start fretting and screaming. The risk is that they start throwing stones, but other adults and we manage to avoid that. Tension is already quite high. The soldiers keep stopping cars going by and in the meanwhile they look at the photos on our digital camera. Then they make a sign for us to go near them and go away. They leave the two passports and the camera on a low wall for us. But there's no sign of our door keys. They leave slowly and stop further away so as to block the entrance to the village. We reach them. They are stopping all the vehicles coming out of Abud. People are forced to get out of their cars and advance with their arms up and documents in their hands with guns pointed at them. We cannot see one of the jeeps as clearly as the others, because the road goes downhill. As we get closer we find out that behind that jeep there's a young man wearing a blue sweater with a red stripe. He has his hands behind his back and is kneeling down. A few minutes go by and he disappears inside the jeep together with another boy who was standing next to him. The vehicles start their engines and leave Abud for good this time. We follow them with our eyes. They can still be seen clearly when a young man approaches us. His brother has called him from inside the jeep just to inform him that they are arresting him. That's how we find out that the two they have taken away are two young men, aged 28 and 22. It is half past five.

Now comes the journey back to Italy. I'll be stopping over in Islamabad and Rawalpindi and then, via Jeddah, I'll arrive in Milan. I think back over my intense days in Afghanistan, and my heart aches. As I look down at the mountains from above, Latifa's face creeps into my mind; in my body I can still feel the warmth of her embrace, and can see her waving at me. Latifa is a woman from Farah who was plunged into despair when her daughter was raped. She no longer wanted to live, unable to bear the thought that she had been powerless to protect her. She managed to overcome the pain that had paralysed her, through the help of other women who recognized her ability and asked her to run the school. In Farah she was always by my side, alert and solicitous, always ready to help me with problems and anxious that I was eating enough. Latifa wears a long, heavy veil that covers her entire body without hiding her face, which is intensely beautiful. Her dark eyes are quickened by a glimmer of light. We have no shared language to communicate in, but we have our living, empathic, intuitive bodies to help us perceive and convey emotions and feelings. The last evening, in Farah, we walk together in the dark of the night, made somewhat brighter by the faint glow of the stars shining high above in an immense sky. I point to the sky and say, in Italian, the word for stars; she smiles, repeats it, pulls me to her to keep me from falling in a hole, and then points to the sky herself and says the word "astora" in the Dari language, or at least this is the sound I heard. In the morning, when we have to take leave of each other, she gathers me into a warm embrace, strokes my face and kisses me five times; I am crying and she smiles

From "la Repubblica", March 17th. Immigrants that try to land in Italy and that Italy deports to Libya end up imprisoned inside a huge detention camp in the desert and then deported to the Sahara on over-loaded lorries. Therefore, since September, when deportations began, 106 of them have died.

at me with infinite tenderness, then places her right hand on her heart, and I repeat her gesture. “Hodo offis, Latifa, tashacor”: “goodbye, Latifa, thank you”.

Al Tuwani, Palestine, March 22th

Operation Dove

This morning the Palestinian shepherds from Al Tuwani found their pastures had been poisoned with tiny green granules: barley grains boiled with rat-poison and carefully placed under the bushes, over an area of about five acres. That area borders the outpost of Havat Ma'on, and is not far away from the Ma'on settlement. They are both inhabited by religious-nationalistic settlers, the political-religious faction that has threatened the Israeli prime Minister Ariel Sharon with death.

Erevan, Armenia, March 24th

Stefano Guglielmin

The Armenian capital has two navels: the first one sinks in the horrible emptiness left behind by the genocide, nowadays all made of lava stone, at the centre of a hill covered in trees, and visible from all directions; the second one shines inaccessible, just inside the Turkish border, with its five thousand metres of light and the arc forgotten under its stones. Everybody's got the most naive, and yet beautiful, dream: seeing at last the obscure side of the Ararat, an 'elsewhere' that founds and nourishes, a ghost that opens every Armenian's sad look towards the future.

Six immigrants from the Far East die in the Sicily channel, as they are trying to reach the Italian coasts. The light boat pilots apparently threw them into the sea, frightened by a financial police motor patrol boat passing by. In the past few years, according to official figures, 1167 immigrant have died in the Sicily channel.

The rest of the city has a vertical body, pink-coloured due to tuff, and as grey as any other city which has been sifted by Soviet architecture. Since the Soviet Union collapsed, factories have been rusting, and so has the atomic power plant, smoking and spreading energy on the

stony edges of the city suburbs. When they tried to turn it off, since it was outdated and unkempt, almost five thousand people froze to death and starved, while dogs gathered in packs, in order to hunt both the living and the dead. As in Sarajevo during the Bosnian war, trees and benches became ashes in stoves, and dogs ended up in common graves, exterminated one by one. The best solution was to start the plant up again, as a steam engine in a futuristic landscape, which provides bread and fire, pumping its fuel out of the ground.

Erevan, Armenia, March 25th, 1.38pm

Stefano Guglielmin

Armenia itself is fuel for western countries and for Vladimir Putin, who is now darting along the all-holes road, escorted and greeted by policemen standing at attention; people are distracted, they eat cakes made with condensed must and nuts, they exchange a few words about the good season being late, they elegantly wipe their dusty shoes with clean handkerchiefs, or walk on stiletto heels even with minus ten degrees centigrade and snow everywhere.

Echmiadzin, Armenia, March 27th, Easter Sunday

Stefano Guglielmin

In the year 301 AD Saint Gregory, imprisoned by the king Trinitate III, saved the latter from madness. The king was converted, and turned Echmiadzin into the Vatican of the first Catholic Country. The rest is grief and pain: there came the Persians, the Seljuk Turks, the Mongols, the Ottoman Turks and then Tsarist Russia and, again, the ‘young Turks’: there came 1915 and one and a half million white deaths. Hitler hoped the same would happen with the Jews: men forget, he said, they have other fish to fry: to cook, for example, and

to work, build bridges, think about the future. Here, inside the church, the future smells of incense and wears colourful clothes. A tiara and a the crosier, a brocade mantle and mass recited in the ancient Armenian language of the *katholikos*, celebrated with the priest's back on the faithful, as it used to be before our "Vatican the second", all sung and moving, with lots of people coming and going all the time, and lighting little yellow candles and praying on their own, while state television is filming everything, even president Kotcharian and his wife, contrite and on bended knees in the first row.

Spitak, Armenia, March 28th

This mountain village, rebuilt after the 1988 earthquake, displays Swiss roofs, thin walls, bitterly cold temperatures and an Italian school, which an industrious Sicilian wanted, and in which ceramist masters from abroad teach children the art of pottery. We had our lunch served by the janitor, a woman in her forties with a face at peace, who spoke about her son at university with pride, "among the best computer science students in the capital" she told us, as she was waiting for her turn to have lunch. She smiled, saying nothing of her husband's death under the debris, or of any other thought that might disturb the atmosphere. Our driver regretfully showed us his international football referee licence: a little impoliteness against the president's team, something like a penalty not awarded or some other trifle put him off side, perhaps forever. He, too, dreams of Switzerland. Or of Italy, and of crossing it in black shorts together with Mr. Collina, "the best referee in the world".

A few miles further north, before reaching Spitak,

Stefano Guglielmin

Another earthquake off the coasts of Sumatra causes two thousand deaths in Indonesia.

March 30th. In Jerusalem, Chief Rabbis, Muslim muftis and both Catholic and Orthodox archbishops launched a joint appeal to forbid the Gay Pride parade due to take place in the city from 18th to 28th August.

too much snow hindered entry to an isolated village. A funeral train had been waiting for three days at a crossroads for a tractor to clear the road. Our guide's grandmother lives there, too, but time to visit her, *our* time, is that of the western world: it was just impossible to remain in the white of such a wait, with so many things to do, so many monasteries to visit. Better go down to the school, and see good luck with our own eyes.

Erevan, Armenia, March 31st

Stefano Guglielmin

What strikes you most, after having visited a dozen monasteries scattered around the most isolated places in Armenia, is their building uniformity, the monotonous succession of arches and columns, the repetition of vaults and empty grey surfaces. What impressed me was something else; for example, the fact that sacred buildings bore inscriptions with hostile symbols on their stones, in order not to be destroyed by invading populations: low-reliefs of the Virgin Mary with Mongolian features, Persian embroidery, Islamic spires, and even Jewish symbols: "As a precaution" our local guide, a former Russian soldier or who knows what, explained, perfectly mixing history and legend. History and legend also merge in our guide's narration in the museum of proto-Christian manuscripts, in the city centre, among which what stands out is the transcription in the Armenian alphabet of the doctrine of Aristotelian *Categories*, a text which, not by any accident, looks into the relationship between word and concept, and formulates the first significant definition of *ousia*, which is one and always identical to itself, although it may take on opposing definitions. Also Armenia is, in its people's conscience, one

Yesterday FAO and WWF presented the UN, who had commissioned it in the year 2000, with the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. Since 1945 more forests, savannas and prairies have been converted to farm use than in the two previous centuries; yet, 856 million people are estimated to have suffered malnutrition in the period 2000-2002, and the per capita food production in Sub-Saharan Africa has decreased. Since 1960 water extraction has doubled; yet, 1.1 billion people do not have access to a decent water supply yet. Since 1980 about 35% of mangrove forests have been lost, 20% of all coral reefs have suffered deterioration and 20% have been destroyed. 25% of mammals, 12% of birds and 32% of amphibians are threatened with extinction.

and always identical to the original one, the Ur-Armenia, kept together by three big lakes, of which nowadays only one belongs to it: it is Sevan Lake, of which Mandel'stam gave a perfect description seventy years ago: "A magnificent wind of fresh waters bursting and howling into one's lungs. The speed of the clouds increased every minute and the surf... hurried to compose by hand, in the half hour it was allowed, a huge Gutenberg Bible, under a gloomy frowning sky".

Erevan, Armenia, April 1st

Stefano Guglielmin

In nineteenth-century painting, Armenia appears as an island lowered into a Géricault foamy sea; in twentieth-century paintings, instead, what prevails is an astonished people and love for French avant-gardes. Outside the museum, a deluge: the demolition of every aesthetical memory and factories that are like cavities inside the mouth of a sleeping body, in which, however, an extraordinary vitality springs up unexpectedly, and creates little markets and kind gestures, a new look, smiles and voluptuous dances in small restaurants, in the evening.

At the *Old Erevan*, accompanied by drums, by the reeds of the *duduk* and by the singing of a mous-tached Orpheus, Eurydice is dancing. Rilke once asked himself: "Singing's being. For the God not daunting. / But when *are we?*". And replied: "Dancer: oh you transition / of all that's transient into action: you did it here! / And the whirl at the end, that tree made of motion, / did it not take control of the whole sweeping year?".

This evening, while I'm having dinner with friends here at the *Old Erevan*, the meaning of everything unfolds and I need nothing else.

Terri Schiavo died yesterday. She had been living in a 'vegetative state' since 1990 and on March 18th, at the instance of her husband, artificial feeding had been stopped. Judges and George Bush, newspapers and televisions clashed over her body.

Yesterday a report by ONU was published. It says that "over one quarter of Iraqi children suffers chronic malnutrition" and, since the beginning of the invasion, "severe malnutrition among children under five has practically doubled" (from 4 to 7.7%). Moreover, there have been 100,000 more dead people in the population than those 'predictable' without an invasion: "the majority is due to violence, but a big part also to the more and more difficult living conditions".

Milan, Italy, April 2nd

Germana Pisa

Now I know how one may feel. It's been like a deep feeling of oppression, somewhere around the heart, a kind of tiredness. It's lasted all day and was persistent. I thought that's what it may be like. And I got scared. As it usually happens to me in such situations, I went on as if nothing was the matter, I didn't rest: I've always thought that the awareness of death must be fought with life. But the warning has come and now I know what it's like. It had already happened before and I'd been scared then, too. At that time, I was breathless, open-mouthed, for long moments, and couldn't catch it again, my breath, I mean. I can remember thinking that's what it would be like when... It may be very different, though, and maybe neither of the two things I mentioned resembles it, and actually it will probably not be like that at all, how do we know, but what is exceptional is the fact that I felt sure about it, that that's what it'll be like, I mean. You tell yourself that death doesn't frighten you at all and you also tell yourself some of those beloved all-time phrases such as: death is just one aspect of life, death is just the other side of life... And it's a fact that that's what it's like and that rationally, therefore, it is accepted. But then, when your breath just comes to a halt and becomes a hiccup, it all cracks up, all your certainties go to pieces, and you immediately imagine that you won't have time to do all the things you'd like to do, and you won't have time to make up for things, and that's the worst thing, maybe even worse than suspended breathing. It's been like that, all day long, a sense of heaviness on my heart which would not leave and which I can still feel now, at intervals, and I strive to smile and tell myself these are just fantasies.

Karol Wojtyła, Pope John Paul II, dies.

New York, April 2nd

Benedetta Scardovi

It is pouring with rain today and a strong wind is blowing. There is a sort of storm. Everything is grey, maybe because of the constant smog and the present weather conditions. A strange sense of sadness has kept me company since this morning, even though it is the weekend and I am not working. I am definitely a Mediterranean soul and I need colours, clean air and sunshine. I am smoking a cigarette on my balcony, on the twelfth floor. I am watching the perennial traffic, I can hear the roar of the city, the thousands yellow taxis gliding away below me, the sirens of these super-zealous American fire fighters. Suddenly, I am taken by surprise by a small white balloon softly flying with its string still hanging from it. It enters my visual field all of a sudden from the right and I can see it as it flies over the traffic. It is poetic. I smile and find myself talking to myself and thanking I don't know who for this instant of delicate grace.

Today and tomorrow regional elections are being held in Italy: they have taken on the meaning of a referendum in favour or against Prime Minister Berlusconi. The outcome will be against.

Paris, April 2nd

Maddalena Chataignier

Spring is coming back. At about five in the morning the chattering of the sparrows welcomes daybreak, it tones down as a car goes by and begins again even louder immediately after. At seven the birds are quiet and the workers arrive, those who are working in the nearby building site. They are all Arabs, always perfectly on time: they enter a prefab, then come out wearing the regulation helmet, and their guttural voices resonate loudly in the street. Work gets organized as a dance, and will last till the evening, its rhythm marked by orders shouted by the foremen from a kind of platform. The building is still at a base-

Yesterday people voted in Zimbabwe to elect a new parliament. Vote rigging and violence have been reported. Victory went once again to Robert Mugabe, who has been ruling for 25 years.

ment stage, two floors below road level. From my window I can see the small men in the distance, like tiny and interchangeable ants. If they lift their heads they must see passers-by in the same way, too, as if they were on another planet. During their midday break, they eat in small groups, with their helmets lying on the ground next to them. At exactly one o'clock the concrete mixer starts humming again and the hustle and bustle starts again, too. When daylight starts dimming and voices reach me closer through my open window, I know that the workers are in the street again and they will soon leave. The day is ending. It is the time when swifts, just back from Africa where they spent winter, start cleaving the sky before darkness comes.

Kabul, Afghanistan, April 6th

Laura Quagliolo

Peshawar, Pakistan. It's seven o'clock in the morning and Rashid, our Pakistani driver, is waiting for us in front of the guesthouse to take us to the Torkham border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. We need to arrive in Kabul by this evening; it's only 160 kilometers from Peshawar, but the journey is very long. Simona and Jody, my companions, are wondering why we have to get up at dawn to travel such a short way. From their point of view they're right; looking at the map you wouldn't think so, but it takes about ten hours to drive those 160 kilometers. I remember the road well, even though I travelled it only once, last year.

The air is still cool at this time of the morning, and Peshawar, usually sweltering hot, noisy, full of traffic, dust, voices, honking horns, and street markets, is just beginning to stir; the roads are

After sixty years, the bus link between the side under Pakistani control and that under Indian control in Kashmir has been restored. For many inhabitants of that region it is a chance to see friends and relatives again. Four Islamic separatist groups have threatened: "We will turn the buses into coffins".

almost deserted, apart from a few cars and a few donkeys pulling carts.

We stop off at the office for the tribal areas, a sort of embassy, to get our permit stamped and to pick up our bodyguard.

The tribal areas (the so-called Agencies) are certain borderlands between Pakistan and Afghanistan which are not under the control of any nation, and answer only to the laws of the tribes inhabiting them. All foreigners who want to travel through these territories must pay a bodyguard who serves as a safe conduct, vouching for their safety so long as they do not get out of the car or move away from it.

The city of Peshawar seems never to end, and up to the Khyber Pass there is an unbroken string of dusty, crowded markets, mud houses, refugee camps, and long rows of freight containers in which all kinds of business and trade are carried on. The Khyber is a 53-kilometer mountain pass through the Hindukush mountains which separates Pakistan from Afghanistan; merchandise, traffic, and armies have travelled over it for centuries.

Our bodyguard is a boy of around nineteen; he is pleasant and curious, speaks a little English and asks what our names are, wants to know what we do in Italy, how old we are, why we're going to Afghanistan. "Afghanistan is a country full of danger, it's not a safe place," he tells us.

I think of everything I've read about the tribal areas - members of the Taliban and al-Qaeda militants fleeing the American war find refuge in these regions, there is a flourishing drug traffic, and enormous quantities of weapons are manufactured (all more or less in broad daylight) - and I smile to myself. I notice the uneasiness his words provoke in my travelling companions, both of

them new to this experience.

In the tribal areas you don't see many women, and all of them are strictly covered by burqas or draped in heavy veils; the villages are enclosed by mud walls pierced by loopholes. Here and there a few children appear, squatting at the side of the road, or shepherds with their flocks.

At ten o'clock we arrive at the Torkham border where we have an appointment with Abdul, the Afghan driver who will accompany us to Kabul. The Torkham border looks like a circle out of Dante's *Inferno*, and elicits intense feelings of rage mixed with a sense of powerlessness. The border is a rusty blue gate, each side of it swarming with busy humanity. People changing money on the black market, cooking bread and food in black, greasy pots, selling beverages, and then there are the drivers, merchants, mechanics, customs offices, military border stations, even a crumbling motel, and dozens of ragged, barefoot children who for a few rupees will carry the bags of people who must cross the border, and crowd around you begging, old women with hunched backs who stretch out their hand beneath a ragged burqa, asking for spare change, soldiers who lash the children for nothing, children scuffling, lines of trucks carrying unbelievable loads, families with countless children in tow, children dragging sacks heavier than they are, and then, covering everything and everyone, clouds and clouds of yellow dust.

Gazes linger on us, as Westerners, as outsiders; the soft, shrewd eyes of the children make me want to stay for hours to listen to their stories. Where does it find shelter in the evening, this crowd of suffering humanity that swarms around the border during the day? I feel a redoubled anguish and rage that the world reserves such a harsh fate for these people.

Abdul, our Afghan driver, hasn't arrived yet, and this is making me a bit anxious: the worst stretch of the road is still ahead of us, and it's almost eleven.

We pass the time in a corner, surrounded by children. The boy we 'engaged' to carry our baggage over the border isn't about to let go of us, and is fighting with the others; a Pakistani policeman arrives and scatters them, lashing out with a strap. After a few seconds they crowd around us again, shouting, as if nothing had happened.

Finally Abdul arrives, a young Hazara man who shakes my hand, smiles at me, and apologizes for being late; he's instantly forgiven. With him is his cousin, who will drive the car for the entire journey. I understand why they're late: they got a flat tire. "Not surprising on a road like that," I think. Before setting out again, Abdul and his cousin are still tinkering around with the wheels of the car, and I can see that they're worried. And indeed, after not more than twenty kilometers of dirt road and potholes we are stopped again with another flat tire. "Pssssssssss...". Another change of tire and we start off once more in the heat and dust. Abdul, perhaps trying to do us a favor, opens the sunroof and a dense cloud of dust blows into the car, covering us and everything else. "Close it, Abdul, close it," we beg, "we can deal with the heat, but not the dust!"

Now we have to get to Jalalabad at almost a walking pace and try to find replacement inner tubes for two tires, and it won't be easy; nothing is easy in Afghanistan. The shops for spare parts are black, dusty freight containers, like almost all the other shops; only a few items are on sale, never new, and looking like they got there by chance. Some have an inner tube, some a few tires, some a sparkplug, some a rearview mirror.

“Abdul, do you think we can make it to Kabul by this evening?” I ask. “Inshallah” (God willing), he answers. What does he mean, *inshallah*? And where will we stay the night if we don’t get to Kabul? I decide to stifle my very Western anxiety and trust in fate.

Finally, after another hour has gone by, and we’ve made the rounds of all the shops in Jalalabad that sell spare parts, finding everything we need in the event of another puncture, we set off again.

Jolting over the potholes in the road, we focus on the landscape: gorgeous, deep green valleys crossed by the Kabul river, which is almost in flood, every so often a small village of mud houses, and everywhere caravans of Kuchi, Afghan nomads, who are headed back up the mountains with their dromedaries, flocks, and household possessions. The Kuchi women wear brightly coloured clothing, their arms and neck adorned with heavy silver jewelry; they wear no burqas, only a veil; they’ve never worn burqas and no one’s ever raised any objections. Even Afghanistan has its contradictions.

I notice that the fields of opium poppies that bordered the entire road last year have disappeared, undoubtedly moved somewhere else nearby. In the last three years Afghanistan has once again become the world’s largest producer of opium (and the opium trade generates 80 percent of the country’s GNP), despite the fact that the Constitution passed in 2004 forbids its cultivation and sale.

I also notice that most of the mined areas along the road, easily recognized due to rocks painted red, have been cleared to allow the road to be paved; now the red rocks have been replaced by white ones. Who knows whether in a year or two it will be possible to travel to Kabul on a

paved road. It's hard to believe, given the conditions of instability and insecurity the country is experiencing, but the hope remains.

We move on, over potholes and through dusty tunnels. It's almost evening, and we're about to approach the last stretch of steep turns leading to Kabul, which is 1800 meters above sea level, surrounded by mountains. We'll be there in about an hour. It's starting to get dark, and in the darkness the gorges we are crossing have a sinister look to them. We're tired, dusty, famished, and our drivers are much worse off than we are, since they've driven this road both ways.

We're happy to be in Kabul again; tomorrow we can embrace our Afghan friends, and seeing them is worth any effort.

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, April 8th

Keren Batiyov

Before leaving Palestine, after working with ISM [International Solidarity Movement], I predicted that the hardest work would begin upon my return home [see: "Here", no. 10, p. 110] - sharing my experience, exposing the ugliness of occupation, providing an alternative Jewish voice to that of mainstream American Jewish mythmaking and denial. I also had promises to keep - promises to the Palestinians and to fellow-ISMers whom I left behind - that I would tell their stories; that I would send others to take my place.

Back in Harrisburg, PA, my first dose of reality came when my local newspaper said that they would only do a story about my ISM experience as long as it was not 'political'. I was stunned. As long as it was not political? Everything is political, even breathing, and I didn't see them avoiding that. The reason they gave was that they took too much

At the beginning of April demonstrations against Japan take place in several Chinese cities. In Peking, on April 9th, the Japanese Embassy and some Japanese shops are attacked. What has given rise to these protests is the adoption in Japanese schools of 'revisionist' history books that deny or understate the atrocities carried out by the Japanese in China during World War II.

flak from members of “the community” whenever they published anything that was “perceived” as pro-Palestinian. I knew exactly which community they were referring to and I find it shameful that within my Jewish community there are such ideological bullies and thugs.

I came away from Palestine with a feeling of fullness, as well as a sense of emptiness. The fullness came from all the graciousness and kindness I experienced from the Palestinians. Arab hospitality is no misnomer. I was also deeply inspired by their resilience and their ability to maintain hope and dignity in the presence of daily humiliations and gross injustice.

I spent much of the winter hibernating, reflecting, reading, and trying to pinpoint the source of my feeling of loss. I finally realized that it was my hope for a just peace for the Palestinian people that had perished - and I was grieving. I see so many parallels between what Israel is doing to the Palestinians and what we, the US, did to our Native American population. My fear is that unless Israel does a complete about-face, and soon, those Palestinians who are not murdered or ethnically cleansed (42% of Israelis openly advocate transfer) will end up on Bantustan-like reservations, broken and beholden for their mere existence to any meager scraps that Israel might throw to them.

Amazingly, the loss of hope has only made me more committed to activism for the Palestinian people. In addition to its long-standing tradition of social justice and ethics, Judaism is also a religion of obligation. I think the ancient rabbis must have known that there would be times when hope would be hidden and/or appear to be lost, and that's where obligation comes in. How one *feels* about a situation or issue is irrelevant - one is *obligated* to do what is right - in this case, to stand in soli-

parity with, and for, the Palestinians. In the absence of hope there is obligation.

Recently, I've been speaking to a number of groups, primarily colleges and universities, as well as churches and peace groups, about my experience in Palestine. I've developed a very good Power-Point presentation, complete with maps and pictures, and I'm giving a copy of the documentary, *Peace and Propaganda in the Promised Land*, to every group that brings me to speak - it's such an important and powerful film about the media bias in the US regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict. Most of the people in my audiences have little or no clue as to what is taking place in Palestine, financed by their tax dollars - their source of news is the corporate media, which is terribly slanted and biased. But, I'm finding that students ask the most probing questions - they have such a hunger to know and understand the world around them.

I make it a point in my presentations to say, at least twice, that I in no way condone suicide bombings, that I am a pacifist, and that the reason I chose to work with ISM was because they are a non-violent action & resistance group. Despite my adamant disavowals of violence, the question invariably comes up, "So, do you justify suicide bombers?". At the suggestion of a friend who is a professional storyteller, I have taken to writing a statement on the board at the very beginning of my presentations: I DO NOT CONDONE SUICIDE BOMBINGS! I call attention to it and it remains there, as my backdrop, during the presentation. I'm finding that people hear selectively and I'm also convinced that there are those who simply do not want to hear - maintenance of their myths is more important than any fact that threatens to dispel those myths. I have to admit that I can muster little patience for those

whose minds and hearts are closed by choice - especially when there are countless others out there who, despite being ill informed about the Israel-Palestine issue, desire to understand and learn - those are the people I want to reach. Finally, my thoughts keep returning to my Palestinian coordinators - how they risk their security and their lives on a daily basis to work non-violently with ISM because they "have a hope for peace". It is Mohamed, and Qusai, and Sami, who inspire me. Maybe through the continued efforts of the coalition of Hope and Obligation, a just peace will be realized. The hard work continues.

April 9th. On Deir Yassin and the Jewish Future. Remembering and resisting

by Marc Ellis

Remembering is a complex act of association, highlighting, forgetting, recalling and most of all reconfiguring a reality that exists within us but no longer outside of us. That is why meeting an old friend or visiting a neighbourhood familiar to our childhood is strange and invigorating. And sometimes disorienting. Memory transports us back to times that were more innocent, when possibility was the reality, and when the world as we know it in adulthood or old age was still far away.

This is true if we are lucky. If our world was not filled with violence and atrocity. If protective walls and the comforting arms of mother and father were experienced rather than sounds of war and the re-

Lecture delivered at the Deir Yassin commemoration at the Peacock Theatre in London on Sunday April 6th 2003.

On 9th April 1948 in Deir Yassin, a Palestinian village situated in the corridor between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, men belonging to Lehi and Ezel, two armed Jewish organizations, murdered 250 Arabs.

ality of dislocation and death at an early age. Once the cycle of violence and atrocity is forced upon us, it comes inside of us, like a thief who has entered a home and remains. Violence and atrocity are shadows that never leave; even when a person is released from its daily onslaught, the shadow remains, especially if that person has lost a loved one, becomes a refugee, loses her land and place and the smells of the flowers and the countryside that enters into our being and make us who we are. People have memories that are so intimate, multi-layered and deeply buried that often it takes a trained psychologist to pry them free. What we remember and how we remember is personal, sometimes without rhyme or reason, eclectic, unpredictable, random. Sometimes we remember beauty when all around us was ugliness and sometimes our memories are bitter when, in comparison with others, our lives were blessed. Bad times can be remembered as good and the best of times can carry a sadness that is unrelenting. Often our memories carry so much feeling and they come to us at the oddest, most inappropriate of times. When the present demands our full attention, memory can leave us unfocused, like a dream in sleep or the feeling of foreboding when we awake. Memory is not simply individual, for a community, too, carries memory. Like the individual, collective memory is made up of images that are reflective, that beseeches realities that no longer exist or are now in an altered state. Individuals have contours to their lives, landscapes of birth and family and childhood. Communities have contours as well, landscapes that are geography and culture and religion. In certain times and places a communal sense becomes accentuated in intensity and duration, heralding the arrival of a sense of people-hood.

Memory is personal and collective: a people remembers its liberations and its defeats, its time in the land and its exile from the land. In that memory are villages and towns and cities, the lay of the land, the call of religion and even the smells so particular to and varied in different lands.

Especially in exile.

So much of the world is in exile. And yet our own exile is the memory we live with. We may witness other exiles, we may note them as terrible and tragic, but they are someone else's experience; they are not our memory. What does memory mean? For what reason do we recollect? Is our memory only our own? What is the difference between individual and collective memory? What should we do with our memories? Should we speak of them or hide them? Caress or distance ourselves from them? Are they for family or friends? Should they be used publicly for peace or for war? Should memory pacify or militarize us? Is memory a bridge to ourselves and to others?

So often memory becomes a blunt instrument used to avenge a hurt remembered. Can it also be a way of embrace, a way of overcoming, a way of receiving and extending the possibility of hope, even, and especially, when the path forward is clouded with the continuing cycle of violence and atrocity? Can memory become a path of forgiveness, a forgiveness that does not forget, does not excuse and does not bury the memory of hurt and violation, but one which insists on a justice that is compassionate and discerning?

It is here that forgiveness may leave its piety and become revolutionary. Justice is not all of life and it does not eliminate the pain of violation. Justice moves the tainted memory to another level, beyond revenge and hate and beyond a spoken forgiveness that is not lived out in the world. Like memory, the experience of revolutionary forgive-

ness is personal and collective. It represents a healing of the interior, of the landscape of individuals and a people. It is a calling out that violation is wrong and that a world without violation is possible, and that even with the difficulty of achieving this in a personal and collective way, it is our only hope. As much as language and thought, the possibility of revolutionary forgiveness distinguishes us from the animal kingdom. It is the substructure of beauty and compassion. It is a path that we all recognize. It may be connected to the millennial quest for God.

For without revolutionary forgiveness, how can we make sense of our interior lives, where past and present, love and hurt, despair and hope intermingle as a multi-layered reality that seeks oneness? How can we make sense of our journeys as communities and peoples without this sensibility, somehow reconciling the disparities found in any ancient journey that is at the same time contemporary?

What keeps us from this revolutionary forgiveness? What blocks that longing of the human heart and the collective imagination? Why do we turn our back on the reconciliation that offers healing and peace, the restoration of the ordinary that within the cycle of violence and atrocity is so extraordinary? A psychologist might say denial, especially when the trauma has been so stark. But denial is not only the trauma as it was then, but as it is remembered now. The trauma then and now is also contextual, depending on what has been done and what is being done with that trauma. As a Jew and part of the first generation raised after the mass slaughter, the generation that helped to name the suffering of European Jewry as the Holocaust, that trauma is obvious. As a child, and even now as an adult, the memory of that suffering is within and around me. But why, then, the difficulty among Jews, a difficulty that has increased over the years,

in recognizing the suffering of Palestinians? Today Palestinian and Israeli scholars alike acknowledge that something terrible happened to the Palestinians in 1948. And more than a few Jews recognize that something terrible is happening to Palestinians today. Why then is this the province of the few rather than a collective awakening? And why does this vanguard of Jews, Jews of conscience, many of them who relate to Palestinians as brothers and sisters in struggle, exist in exile from the Jewish community rather than form its core, its foundational outreach to the world, as a witness to our history of trauma and our own desire to be healed and live in justice and peace? Why do we as a people not recognize Deir Yassin as foundational to Jewish life? For without this recognition our future will be consigned to the category of empires that once persecuted us as Jews. Why is Jewish leadership in the political, religious and academic worlds so complicit in this cycle of violence and atrocity against the Palestinian people, by silencing Jewish dissent, by lobbying for policies of power and might, and by denigrating those Palestinians who are struggling for freedom and justice? Why is this complicity rewarded in American and British society with status and honors and why is rabbinic employment and career advancement often dependent on the silence of the rabbis on this issue? Is this complicity out of fear or ignorance or simply the desire for power? Does it come from a memory of trauma and the refusal to ever again be vulnerable to the 'other'? Is this 'other', in this case the Palestinian, now a twin, carrying a trauma that is too similar to our own, one that we are causing? Do we feel that recognizing our twin somehow diminishes or implicates us? Perhaps this non-recognition is a form of protection that has become paradoxically a safe haven for the

Jewish people. Our own suffering and innocence, which continues even in empowerment, is a place where accountability is absent, where Jews are above the law and beyond the reach of even our own conscience.

That is the reason for the wall of denial in memory and the wall of separation being built today in Israel. It is a wall that ultimately is self-protection from the haunting images of a suffering which we are causing. It is a spiritual and physical wall that guards us against our own indictment. It is a wall that seeks to partition the memory of Deir Yassin as a memory apart from us, a memory that informs us, at inconvenient times and places, of the trauma we have caused and the need for our confession as we have sought the confession of those who transgressed against us. Would our confession set us free? A confession is a dealing with memory just as the wall is. A memorial at Deir Yassin would be for Palestinians what the Holocaust museum is for Jews. But it would also be for Jews. Would any Jew think that the Holocaust memorials around the world are just for Jews? Are they not also for the perpetrators and bystanders as a permanent memory of injustice and its cost to future generations? A formative event of suffering is not only formative for the victim; it is formative for the perpetrator as well. Deir Yassin is to be remembered by Palestinians in light of Palestinian history and the future. It also needs to be remembered by Jews for Jewish history and a future.

For can there be a Jewish future within empire? Can we speak of what it means to be Jewish in the context of conquering another people? Jewish articulation has always contested empire, even in the Biblical period, and contemporary Jewish life is built around struggles for justice and inclusion in so many fields and movements. Even

the violence against Palestinians is argued less in terms of empire than self-defense and terror. But as those who are known for critical thought, it is difficult to believe that Jews don't see through this rhetoric.

I have often wondered how Jews justify the memory lapse that equates the Palestinian struggle with Israel and the Nazi assault against the Jewish people. And how Jews, even many in the peace movement, speak of the need for Palestinians to guarantee Jewish security. Have they lost their ability to think or has their memory entered a place of denial that limits thought and compassion? Is this deliberate, like a smoke-screen, or so deeply felt that there seems to be no other way to understand the reality as it is today than in terms of power and aggression? And why can some Jews understand while others cannot?

Recently, several reflections have appeared in the Israeli press that remind us of this complexity. I cite three of these.

First, an article in "Ha'aretz" described a group of Danish educators who had traveled to Jerusalem for a two-week seminar at Yad Vashem's International School of Holocaust Studies. There they met with the noted Holocaust scholar Yehuda Bauer, who commented on the possibility that the state of Israel might commit genocide against the Palestinian people. "Am I to understand that you think Israel could commit genocide on the Palestinian people?" asked one young educator, somewhat taken aback. "Yes" answered Bauer. "Just two days ago, extremist settlers passed out flyers to rid Arabs from this land. Ethnic cleansing results in mass killing." Bauer added that Israeli polls showed a high percentage of Palestinians want to get rid of Jews. Bauer concluded: "What we have here between Israelis and Palestinians is an armed conflict - if one side

becomes stronger there is a chance of genocide. Fortunately, both sides are very strong and good at killing each other so you realize you can't get rid of each other and must come to some sort of political solution”.

Second, a reflection by a Jewish peace activist, Gila Svirsky, titled *The Great Wall of Denial*, addresses the horrors of the recent Israeli actions in the West Bank and Gaza in some detail and asks why Israelis do not seem able to understand what is happening to Palestinians. She cites three reasons: the media which report the facts and figures but does not convey the suffering behind the ‘iron fist’ policies; the Palestinian “violence against Israeli civilians” that provides the cover for Israelis to focus on “our own pain and fear”; and the political and rabbinical leaders who engage in “fear-mongering” and dehumanization of the other. Overall, Svirsky thinks it might be the problem of those who have been abused, abusing others. Svirsky concludes with a lament about the difficulty of breaking through the wall of denial. A new campaign among a coalition of Israeli peace groups has the slogan “Don’t say you didn’t know...” in reference to the German claims of ignorance during the Holocaust. “And yet with all this effort, will we be able to break through the Great Wall of Denial?”

Finally, an Op-ed piece by the Israeli politician Shulamit Aloni, a former Knesset member and government minister, is titled *Murder of a Population Under Cover of Righteousness*. Aloni is responding to a previous commentary that claims the Israeli government cannot commit genocide against the Palestinians because Israel is a democracy and heir to the tradition of Jewish ethics. The term genocide immediately suggests a comparison with the Holocaust, and Aloni be-

gins her response with a provocative statement: “We do not have gas chambers and crematoria, but there is no fixed method of genocide”. After citing the brutal nature of recent Israeli military actions, Aloni writes of Israeli children being indoctrinated in religious schools with the notion that Arabs are Amalek and therefore, as in the Biblical story, need to be destroyed. Aloni cites a rabbi who wrote in the Bar Ilan University newspaper that his research showed that the Palestinians are Amalek, and therefore genocide against them is a command of God.

Amalek. The son of Esau, cited in Genesis 36,12; Amalecites are described in the Bible as Israel's enemies par excellence.

These teachings are horrendous; they have consequences in the political realm. However, the problem lies at another level. Israel is not planning to commit genocide, Aloni surmises, but Israelis really do not want to know what is happening in the territories: “The nation is following orders given by the legitimate representatives of the regime”. Aloni concludes her article with a series of ironic statements: “Of course with our self-righteousness, with our self-adoration in our ‘Jewish ethics’ we make sure to advertise how beautifully the doctors take care of Palestinian victims in the hospitals. We do not advertise how many of those are executed in cold blood in their own homes. So it’s not yet genocide of the terrible and unique style of which we were past victims. And as one of the smart generals told me, we do not have crematoria and gas chambers. Is anything less than that consistent with Jewish ethics? Did he ever hear how an entire people said that it did not know what was done in its name?”.

Aloni concludes with a memory that Jews articulate frequently to the world. It is a memory of untold suffering and degradation. It is the Holocaust that books and movies can only begin to describe or visualize. It is a memory that Yehuda

Bauer and Gila Svirsky recall in their own writing and which surrounds contemporary Jewish life like the wall - the great wall of denial - now being built to surround the Palestinian wall. It is not the same; it is not completely different. It is not the same; there are too many similarities. We are no longer the victims; we have created victims. The memory of the Holocaust remains; the memory of the Holocaust is tainted by what we are doing to the Palestinian people. The Germans denied knowledge of what was being done. Many Jews in Israel, in the United Kingdom and the United States deny knowledge of what we are doing. On Deir Yassin Day 2003, in this season of war where memory encourages violence and denial and resists it, the memory that resists is losing, is receding, and is itself tainted. For when memory is invoked with the power of the state, it becomes an assault from which there is no return. Here the victim of the powerful and the resister within the powerful community begin to forge a new way of remembering, crossing political, religious and cultural boundaries until the possibility of a revolutionary forgiveness appears on the horizon. At the heart of this forgiveness are a confession and a justice that seeks anew the memory that heals. For the memory of injustice can only become a path of peace when the possibility of justice is embraced by 'enemies' now joined in an enterprise that gives life rather than death. Today that revolutionary forgiveness for Jews and Palestinians is very far away, almost impossible to envision, becoming even more difficult to articulate, carrying with it an almost ludicrous quality. It is therefore more important than ever to hold out this hope against hope, to cry out for it, to struggle to attain it, to be faithful to this vision for the long haul. At least for this moment, in this theater, on this day of remembrance, let us hold this revolu-

tionary forgiveness close to our heart and extend it toward one another. Perhaps this new memory, a revolutionary forgiveness experienced by Jews and Palestinians, even if just for the moment to-night, may call other memories away from the violence they too often become, toward the peace and justice they are called to be.

It took a long time

di Tommy Tabermann

Here

notes from the present

It took a long time
to understand that it's easy to put the world right:
that there are some things we remember and others we forget,
that we smile like children,
and that we aren't afraid to love.

Back to the diaries

Here

notes from the present

Varese, Italy, undated

Paola Turrone

A few years ago in Monterrey, in the north of Mexico, where the summit on development funding took place, a wall was built opposite the area that hosted the United Nations conference to hide

April 9th. In the village of Huankantou, in the eastern province of Zhejiang, in China, a march of over two hundred elderly women

a shanty-town that had been fighting for its legalization for over twenty years. The Town Council confined street children and beggars inside organized shelters, and camouflaged those bidonvilles that could not be hidden by painting them.

against a complex of extremely polluting chemical industries is attacked by the police. Two women are killed.

Mexico can be considered a place where 'protective' walls are being experimented: it is here, on the border with the United States, that the first prototype of 'transparent' wall has been achieved. American builders had received instructions to build an insuperable, though at the same time 'luminous and friendly', barrier. The result was a salmon-coloured wall, with huge windows with blue edges and small holes to allow people to speak to one another through the barrier. The prototype is going to be erected in other patches of that border along about two thousand miles.

There have been suggestions for this kind of architectural spiral in Europe, too: a few years ago, one of the area councils within the municipality of Usti nad Labem, in the Czech Republic, requested the construction of an over six and half-foot-high stone wall to protect 'respectable citizens' who were disturbed by the view of broken-down buildings where the city gipsy families lived. Even the protests of the then president Havel were useless.

Walls are built in order not to lead men of goodwill into temptation. Walls are rigid eye-patches to avoid dirtying one's sight. Since it is looking that gives rise to the rest: disgust, rebellion, fear, questions. And while the world is expanding, on derelict ships and inside TV screens, small town districts in small countries around the small world arm themselves with bricks to fight the provocation of confrontation. Sometimes they paint them, because they played with Lego as children, so that no one may say that they have no sense of aes-

thetics, but all they are able to do is to shut their eyes, and therefore their stomach, heart, brains. These walls are imperatives not to look, they are institutional, political choices. It is a matter of nourishing from the top the hypocrisy of what *can* be seen. That's how voyeurism is fed, both the virtual kind and the television kind; it is through television that we want to look inside the house in Cogne or inside war prisons, as if it all were a Big Brother reality show. Voyeurism has nothing to do with the stink of a bidonville, the blood of a murder, or the darkness of a bunker. We have got used to thinking that everything can be packed inside a medium placed on a wooden chest of drawers or a plastic trolley.

In Cogne, Val d'Aosta (Italy), the terrible murder of a baby took place, and his mother was accused of it.

In the United States videos of the Gulf War are sold under the category of action films, Play Stations simulate blood squirts on the screen. This protectorate on sight has an aesthetical value, not a moral one. A surface placatory aesthetics, which is in fact a television-voyeuristic one: gipsies hinder our view over a tree-lined avenue, shantytowns clash with the limousines of Heads of State, pink and blue border walls match the sky and the cactus flowers. At such a level, erecting walls is just like switching channel.

Work is still in progress to build the wall that will separate Israel from the Palestinian territories. Its look will vary among cultivated fields or inside urban areas, to make the obstacle topographically insuperable each time. Reinforced concrete and barbed wire are hate made physical, our look becomes bodily and requires a distance, a monument to an impossible proximity.

As a planetary mafia ritual: as long as I can't see, I don't know; not wanting to see is not wanting to know, it is guilty ignorance that becomes a condemnation: every man-child knows, since

they are born, the condemnation of not existing if nobody sees them.

Varese, Italy, April 11th

A Russian proverb goes something like this: eyes fear, but hands do.

A few kilometres outside Jerico there's the archaeological site of Ayn al Diuk, and every day six young Palestinians, together with their teacher, Osama Hamdan, reach it after passing an Israeli block: they are restoring the mosaics in a synagogue dating back to the 6th century AD. These young people are entrusted with the task of saving from ruin a testimony of Jewish history. They are reconstructing history, they are reassembling the pieces of the mosaic: slow and accurate movement which allows one to think, and to make some room inside for understanding and discrimination. To take care of something: this is a gesture which occurs, which starts afresh from art, from young people with a passion, which begins with preserving a space, our memory. To rescue something of the Other, and may each one of us rescue something of the other: perhaps this is a possible way towards peace.

Paola Turroni

A report by the World Bank, which has been disclosed today, reveals that money periodically sent to their countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America by workers who emigrated to western countries represents twice as much as public aid allocated by industrialized countries to the Third World and contributes to the subsistence of 500 million families. This figure, among other things, is probably underestimated, because the World Bank and the Monetary Fund consider mainly money transfers that take place by traditional means, such as banks or 'money transfer' agencies.

Cologno Monzese, Italy, April 12th

Those who arrive from Milan and get to the end of via Palmanova, north-east, find Cologno Monzese, today a town with a population of 48,262. One can easily reach it by underground, too. And, together with many other towns formerly belonging to the industrial belt around Milan (all of them situated in the open countryside until the fifties), it can hardly be distinguished from the suburbs of the city: a

Donato Salzarulo

A Hamas squad which was instructed, according to a Palestinian police officer, to "enforce Islamic values in the Gaza Strip" has assassinated a young 22-year-old Palestinian woman: she had shown herself in public with her boyfriend

be distinguished from the suburbs of the city: a mass of buildings and a tangle of roads and lanes, just here and there interspersed with some small parks. Its transformation from a town into a city in those years, and from part of an industrialized area with small and medium-size factories (engineering, plastic, paper) until the seventies into a crucial point for the service-producing sector (the Mediaset television studios belonging to the current Italian Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, are here), took place in the wake of the history of immigration from the South of Italy and from Veneto during the 'economic boom'. Together with workers' fights and ordinary rebellions. Which are still carried on underground today, though no longer brought to the fore, but forgotten by those zealous salesmen of post-modern lies. The *City Forum* and the '*Stella*' district are two of these melting pots of culture and independent political resistance. Do they have to do with post-modernity or with post-Fordism? Are they attempts of a collective want for *creating places* even where the squalor of suburban life seems to be appalling, for contrasting the voracity of those who want to cancel these places, and replace them with *non-places* or mere ghettos where to shove the rejects of flexitime work? We do not have an answer. But we want to have a closer look at this changing reality and at these new forms of resistance. The '*Stella*' District, which used to be the centre of surely *proletarian* fights around the years '68-'69, seems to be still - against all trends - weaving its red thread within a social fabric which has been transformed by new migrations. Watch out for the '*Stella*' District, built in the early sixties, at the time of the Great Immigration, where 1,650 people live today, about 20 per cent of which are fragments of the New Great Plane-

on the beach of Gaza.

What emerged from a research published by the British newspaper "The Independent" is that in Great Britain every year people throw in the bin food for an amount of 30 billion euros, five times as much as the country spends on international aid. In America 45% of food is thrown in the bin.

tary Immigration.

I've come to a meeting with the 'Stella' District Collective. Gilberto, an old friend of mine, is speaking. In twenty-five years they've done plenty of things: a nice spacious and comfortable Centre, where they hold popular school lessons for the children of the working-class. Gilberto is pausing in midstream. He is using the word *working-class* a bit awkwardly, since it has virtually disappeared from conversational scenarios. *As they were called in the early sixties*, he is specifying. Now their pupils are the children of 'extra-community' immigrants. In this District, in fact, many Peruvians and Filipinos have settled down. And not only them.

My friends from the Collective have been clever: in order to maintain their autonomy, they have invested part of their savings in premises that are used to meet, communicate, and get a refill of social interactions and identity. *We are what we objectively are, but we also are as we describe ourselves*. Gilberto has read Aristotle and Wittgenstein. *We are an avant-garde organization... we do mass work... a cultural intervention within the working-class movement in this district*. His tongue is still hesitating on words and notions such as *avant-garde, mass, working-class movement*. He is assuming that they may sound ghostly to his audience's ears.

When the first young man in the district graduated, they organized a lovely party for him. A goal had been achieved: one of belonging, of social proud. People at the Collective keep thinking, quite rightly, that there are mutual relationships between social conditions and levels of education: *although workers have disappeared from people's conversations*, Gilberto is adding, *they still exist and have fewer graduated children*. And there are

mutual relationships between social conditions and health too: if hospitals and medical examinations keep being privatized and people will have to show their insurance card before being taken into hospital, those who will pay more than anyone else will be poor people. That is, said in a Christian way, the last ones.

The Collective's culture is a stabilized compound of traditions: there's Don Milani [see note on page 25] and the socialist and communist history of the Labour Movement. Gilberto's voice is still unsteady. And yet this is not a séance. It is a civil, quiet meeting; an understanding talk among people who are willingly listening to one another.

We asked to meet them, I mean we from the Forum did, because we are going to reorganize our experience. We do not want that seed of participatory democracy experienced in the squares during the election campaign in 2004 to die. On that occasion, we supported the candidate for the mayoralty Vittorio Beretta, a unionized Catholic-Communist worker who now hopes Cardinal Martini will be elected Pope. *I hope in the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.* We supported him because we were tired of and impatient with this official TV Left, especially the DS left-wings [see note on page 25], who are ready to forget everything: labour, democratic communism, rights and the social state... up to Fassino, secretary of the DS party, who cleared Craxi [the socialist Italian Prime Minister from 1983 to 1987, then sentenced for corruption] as a reformist and an innovator during their latest congress. *Reformist*, an awful word. Nowadays more than in the past. And *innovator*? And *Centre*? The words used by mass media politics are castor oil. Just impossible to be taken.

The Collective rightly lays claim to its autonomy from institutions too. In favour of confrontation,

of course. And also of co-planning if necessary, as it happened for the accomplishment of the Centre, but without any traps. We daily say who we are through our needs and our actions. We know who can really represent us within institutions. Surely not those who, right from the beginning, go against our needs. Here, where the Mediaset Tower soars and can be seen by everybody from the East Bypass, a really stirring electoral campaign took place. *Comunisti Italiani* (the Italian Communists Party), *Rifondazione Comunista* (the Communist New Foundation Party), DS political militants who would never have 'betrayed' their party, people involved in cultural associations and voluntary organizations, clergymen, teachers, whole families, people who are usually indifferent or apathetic: a whole crowd of people met and swung into action in order to impose their right to a shared and fulfilled democracy, as far as possible right from the beginning. And all this was against those who, due to summit agreements, want to thrust upon the city, and upon all cities, this or that candidate, this or that mere programmatic slogan. That was a time of great joy. Short-circuits, sparks, illuminations. A collective wind of autonomy, of another kind of freedom, not the one promised by liberalist owners, and of authentic solidarity, blew for Cologno. Creating a community, creating a new one. Even the Nobel Prize Dario Fo found some time to come and support our experience. We did not go beyond the first round of elections by an inch. At that point we turned to the second candidate of the Centre-left coalition: Mario Solitano, one of the architects of the General City Plan, an all-involved member of the DS party, who has matured among the various factions in the party and... let those who break the balance of powers be warned. An honest person. As the

Mayor and as the technician who planned the territory and therefore knows it thoroughly, we'll see what common interest results he will manage to obtain within the impalpable Common House of the inhabitants of Cologno through strategic upgrading interventions, which have been estimated on a packed territory, already abundantly given away to concrete. But here there are people who dream of flyovers, tunnels and underground world with shops and shopping centres attended by inhabitants full of visions. There are those who dream of *Ipercoop*, multi-level cylinders, Disneyland, *non-places*, technological wonders.

My friends from the Collective, instead, would like the interment of that length of the East Bypass which, from the Centre of Cologno to the South of Cologno, divides the town in two. An old-time eyesore which brought to the inhabitants of the '*Stella*' District, and not only to them, very high pollution thresholds. We are here, in fact, to organize the next Forum evening gathering. The one that will kick off 'district contracts', one of the points in our electoral programme, which we want to force the local administration to carry out anyway. Come here, we are saying, come and tell us about your experience. Say what you have done worth knowing and how, so that other people can do the same. And then point out what the unsolved problems are, those to which you will devote yourselves in the next few months. Gilberto - he is always the one to call the shots - is reading the Sheet that summarizes contents and deadlines. Ah, those from the Collective are so precise! They always prepare each meeting to perfection. When you get there, they greet you, introduce themselves and give you the letterhead Sheet with the logo of the

District and the summary of: A) what was said during the previous meeting; B) what is being said that afternoon; C) the agreements that will be made... A perfect organizational machine. We are more fluid at the Forum. They work and observe metrics, we follow a rhythm. They have found a place, a niche from where to watch Cologno and the world. We would like to grasp the rhythms of the city and hurl its needs and necessities against local (and other) political bureaucracy. At least we would like to get a bit more consideration in a democracy which confines itself to piercing and sounding us. And, every five years, it leaves us to the loneliness of the cathode ray tube.

We talk for almost two hours. Calmly and observing turns. We are not inside a TV sitting-room. We do not think that those who speak more or shout more will rout their opponents. We agree on how to organize the next meeting. They will repeat who they are, what they do and to which problems they will devote themselves: from that of urban blight in the District to that of the running of the nearby park, from the use of social areas in the Centre to the problem of traffic and of the interment of the Bypass monster.

At that point, a visit to their jewel, the social centre, is a must. It is a building of about 200 square metres with a sloping roof, built right opposite the District, inside the small park that used to be a dump). On the door there is the Don Milani Co-operative plate with the list of some subscribers. Upon entering, one finds oneself in the corridor; on your right there is a small office, then the first big classroom and then a second one; at the end the toilets. The ceiling is high and airy with wooden beams as in some little mountain churches. The furniture is suitable

for the education and social activities that are held there. On a big blackboard words and dates for the next meetings.

Abud, Palestine, April 15th

Logan

Today the Israeli military authorities paid the Mayor of the village of Abud a visit to inform him that, in order to erect the safety barrier, the Wall, they will seize about 1,500 acres of the village land, much of which are olive groves. Moreover, the layout of the wall will deprive Abud of the ancient church of Saint Barbara, a place of pilgrimage and a symbol of the Christian identity within the community, as well as of the village archaeological area, with Hebrew tombs dating back to over two thousand years ago and important frescoes and low-relieves, and of a big drinking water tank. The layout of the Wall will therefore come as close as about two hundred yards to the village, which is about four miles away from the Green Line, the border between the State of Israel and the Palestinian Occupied Territories.

In Paris a hotel burns down in the city centre where both the state and the town council have given accommodation to a group of immigrants. Twenty of them die. Before that they had been living there in tiny dirty rooms full of cockroaches and fleas in the mattresses, some former lodgers related.

April 17th. A car bomb explodes in Iraq, on the road to Baghdad airport, against a passing car. Four people die. One of them is Marla Ruzicka, an American humanitarian operator.

Ravenna, Italy, April 28th

Logan

“Can I give you my exercise-book to give the children down there?” I had just finished talking to an elementary school fifth year class in Italy. About children who have to walk almost two miles to go to school escorted by Israeli soldiers, otherwise settlers may attack them. About the caves with smoky fires in the middle where they live. About the sheep and other pets they have to look after when they come back from school.

April 19th. Joseph Ratzinger is elected pope, with the name of Benedict XVI.

April 23rd. The internal investigation carried out by the US armed forces into the tortures inside the Iraqi prison of Abu Ghraib ended with the acquittal

As I was leaving, a little boy, down there, about three feet below me, looking up at the sky to look at me, asked me: "Can I give you my exercise-book to give the children down there?". Between those three feet below me and his eyes, a few seconds of silence, my astonishment, bewilderment, and surprise; then I managed to say something: "Of course you can, I'll give it to them." Then all the others followed. They came and each handed me a new exercise-book to write in. Some of them, before giving it to me, erased the names they had already written down, some others forgot to rub them out. Someone started bringing a pen, someone else an eraser, scissors or glue. "Can I give you this pen I like so much to take them?" "Of course you can, I'll give it to them." Then, from favourite pens, they turned to key rings, furry teddy bears. Without me having asked for anything.

of the military leadership of the American force in Iraq. Yesterday, April 27th, a year after the circulation of the photos of those tortures, the "Wall Street Journal" asked America to "apologize with those soldiers whose honour was stained by mass media". In the meanwhile, on April 25th the US tribunal of inquiry into those American soldiers who, on March 4th, killed the Italian secret services agent Nicola Calipari at a check point, judged those soldiers not guilty.

Contributors and translators

Here

notes from the present

Lucianna Argentino was born in 1962 in Rome, where she lives. She has published several poetry collections; the latest is *Verso Penue!*, Edizioni dell'Oleandro, Roma-L'Aquila 2004. She works as a cashier in a supermarket.

p. 5

Maria Bastanzetti was born in 1967 in Castellanza and lives in Saronno, Italy. For almost fourteen years now she has been translating children's books from English, French and Spanish. She has also worked at Linate Airport Duty Free, Milan, and for a publishing firm.

p. 35

Keren Batiyov resides in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. She is a Jew of Conscience, a Jew who embraces the prophetic Jewish ethical tradition in opposition to Jewish oppression of others and the idolatry of nationalism. She spent two weeks in 2004 with International Solidarity Movement (ISM) near Nablus, Palestine. She is an activist for human rights and social justice, a poet and an avid Zydeco dancer.

p. 88

Johanna Bishop (icchiojo@tiscali.it) was born in Chicago in 1974, and lived in Pennsylvania and New York before moving to Tuscany in 1998. She translates from Italian into English. In this issue she has translated the essay by Franco Toscani and the pages by Graziella Longoni and Laura Quagliolo.

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70, 75, 83

Sebastiano Buonamico lives in Sesto San Giovanni (Milan). A graphic designer and a photographer, his photographs have been on show in several exhibitions. He is the author of the covers of this magazine.

cover

Maddalena Chataignier was born in Milan in 1942, but has lived in France since 1967. She is member of an association which assists leukaemia patients and which is carrying out a campaign to sensitize hospital staff to the importance of ‘accompanying’ terminal patients in their last days.

pp. 53, 82

Brigitte Ciaramella was born in 1966 and was brought up bilingual Italian/English. She is a Philosophy graduate and an EFL teacher, as well as a freelance translator with a special interest in literary works. She can be contacted by email at brigitte.ciaramella@tin.it. She translated all the articles in the present issue unless otherwise specified.

Mariela De Marchi, 29, was born in Bolivia of an Italian father and a Bolivian mother. She lives in Camisano Vicentino, near Vicenza, Italy. She’s translator and sometimes journalist.

pp. 6, 34, 44, 55

Operation Dove, civil peace corps of the “Association Pope John XXIII”, open to volunteers, both believers and not. Their instruments are the sharing of war victims’ every day’s life and co-operation with non-violent and pacifist realities on both sides at war, “trying to be neutral towards these latter, but not towards injustice”. In the past ten years they have been present in Croatia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo, Chechnya, Timor Est, Chiapas, and Congo. At the moment they are permanently present in Israel - Palestinian Occupied territories, and in Kosovo, and are going to start operating in North Uganda.

pp. 12, 34, 45, 76

Flemming Dyrman lives in Uldalsvej, Denmark. Audiologist (speech therapist), he's working with people with aphasia.

p. 59

Marc H. Ellis was born in North Miami Beach, Florida, in 1952. He is University Professor of American and Jewish Studies and Director of the Center for American and Jewish Studies at Baylor University (Waco, Texas). He has authored fifteen books and edited five others, among them: *Unholy Alliance: Religion and Atrocity in Our Time*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1999; *O Jerusalem: The Contested Future of the Jewish Covenant*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1999; *Practicing Exile: The Religious Odyssey of an American Jew*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 2002; *Israel and Palestine: Out of the Ashes: The Search for Jewish Identity in the Twenty-First Century*, Pluto Press, London-Sterling, Va., 2002; and *Toward a Jewish Theology of Liberation: the Challenge of the the Twenty-First Century*, 3rd expanded ed., Baylor University Press, Waco, Tex., 2004. Ellis' many articles have been published in diverse American and international publications, including "International Herald Tribune", "European Judaism", "Ha'aretz", "Jordan Times", "Christian Century", and "Journal of Palestine Studies". He is on the editorial board of the progressive Jewish journal "Tikkun". Influenced by the Jewish ethical tradition and the dissonance of Jewish life after the Holocaust, with other Jews of Conscience Marc Ellis has sought to rescue the Jewish ethical tradition in the face of the demands of the 20th and now 21st Century. In his early career he became deeply interested in Christian Liberation Theology.

p. 91

Carol Faison, an American living in Venice, Italy, is the founder (1991) and manager of “Care and Share”, a non-profit organization which rescues children from the streets and ghettos in Vijayawada, the third largest city in Andhra Pradesh, India (www.careshare.org). The English version of her diary pages (except for those dated February 7th and February 10th) is hers.

pp. 10, 13, 17, 21,
24, 33, 37, 38, 54

Maria Granati was born in Potenza Picena (Macerata) and lives in Modena, Italy. For many years a political militant in the Italian Communist Party, she has been elected many times in provincial administrations and in the municipal administration of the town where she lives, as well as in Parliament, for three periods of legislature. She is now involved in cultural activities with associations that deal with adult education.

pp. 6, 15, 45

Silvio Grignaschi was born in 1952 in Milan, Italy, where he lives. He has been working at IBM since 1977. His diary pages were translated by Chris Fogg, whom we thank.

pp. 16, 19, 22, 23, 25

Stefano Guglielmin was born in 1961 in Schio, Italy, where he lives. He teaches Italian Literature in an Art High School. He has published a few poetry collections (the latest is *Come a beato confine*, Book Editore, Castel Maggiore 2003) and the essay *Scritti nomadi. Spaesamento ed erranza nella letteratura del Novecento*, Anterem, Verona 2001.

pp. 76, 77, 78, 79, 80

Andrea Inglese was born in 1967 in Turin, Italy, and lives in Paris. He has published a few poetry collections (the latest one is *Bilico*, D'If edizioni, Napoli 2004) and an essay on the theory of the novel: *L'eroe segreto. Il personaggio*

nella modernità dalla confessione al solipsismo,
Edizioni dell'Università di Cassino, 2003.

p. 26

Jouni Inkala was born in Kemi, Finland, in 1966. He is a poet and a writer, and the author of seven poetry collections. The first one, in 1992, was *Tässä sen reuna* (“Here its boundaries”). In the following ones, the scene of his narration moved from the ‘boundaries of the world’ to other areas of the European continent. His latest collection, *Sarveisaikoja* (“Times of horn”) dates back to April this year.

p. 47

Julie (a pseudonym) was born 34 years ago in Trento, where she lives. She is involved in education and cultural exchanges. She has been a volunteer in Operation Dove.

p. 72

Logan (a pseudonym) is an Italian volunteer of “Operation Dove” in Israel-Palestinian Occupied Territories.

pp. 36, 42, 111

Graziella Longoni teaches philosophy and psychology, and is specialized in the rehabilitation of the mentally ill. Since 1996 she has been a member of the international movement “Women in Black”. She has taken part in numerous delegations to Pakistan, Israel, Afghanistan, and Serbia. Her diary entries have been translated by Johanna Bishop.

pp. 61, 64, 66, 68,
70, 75

Marina Massenz was born in 1955 in Milan, Italy, where she lives. She’s a therapist of psychomotricity, and is the author of several essays on this subject. She has also published the poetry collection *Nomadi, viandanti, filanti*, Amadeus, Cittadella (Padova) 1995.

p. 3

Gery Moyano, born in 1973 in Bolivia, now lives in the United States. He's a psychologist and works in the Human resources department of a company. He collaborates with some newspapers and writes poetry and essays. He is particularly interested in the Latin-American situation, especially in his own country, Bolivia, and in immigration from Latin-America to the United States.

p. 20

Massimo Parizzi was born in 1950 in Milan, Italy, where he lives. He's a translator. His writings have appeared on some newspapers and in some magazines. He founded this magazine and is its editor.

pp. 8, 60

Germana Pisa was born in 1941 in Milan, Italy, where she lives. A housewife "with a lot of interests", as she describes herself, she is actively involved in the Seattle movements.

pp. 42, 81

Laura Quagliuolo, a "Woman in Black" since 1999, participated in seven delegations between 2001 and 2005, visiting Pakistan and Afghanistan to meet with the activists of HAWCA, RAWA, and OPAWC, Afghan women's associations committed to human rights and women's rights which the Women in Black have collaborated with since 1999. She works in the publishing industry as an editor. Her diary entries have been translated by Johanna Bishop.

p. 83

Donato Salzarulo lives and works in the suburbs around Milan. He is interested in poetry, pedagogy and politics. He has written about Fortini, Zanzotto, and his poet friends belonging to the 'verse-writing multitude'. He has published poetry, essays and various kinds of writings on local and national reviews. At present he is working in

the editorial office of the review “Poliscrittura”, and the text we are publishing appeared in its trial number (May 2005).

p. 104

Benedetta Scardovi was born 32 years ago in Romagna, Italy. She has been living and working in New York for five years translating subtitles and dubbings from English and Spanish into Italian.

p. 58, 82

Tommy Tabermann, born in Tammisaari, Finland, in 1947, is the author of about fifty poetry collections and six novels. The subjects dealt with in his poems are mainly nature, interpersonal relationships and, above all, love in all its senses. His poem was translated by G.R., whom we thank.

p. 101

Roberto Taioli was born in 1949 in Milan, Italy, where he lives. He teaches Philosophy at two Universities. In addition to several philosophical essays, he has published some poetry collections (the latest is *Acque a Cortot*, Ulivo, Balerna 2003).

p. 40

Franco Toscani, an essayist and a teacher, was born in 1955 in Piacenza, Italy, where he lives. His writings have been published on several newspapers and magazines. He is the co-author of *Vita e verità. Interpretazione del pensiero di Enzo Paci* (“Life and truth. An interpretation of Enzo Paci’s thought”), edited by S. Zecchi, Bompiani, Milano 1991; and, together with S. Piazza, he has published *Cultura europea e diritti umani* (“European culture and human rights”), Cleup, Padova 2003. He has also published a collection of poetry, *La benedizione del semplice*, Blu di Prussia, Piacenza 2003. His essay was translated by Johanna Bishop, whom we thank.

p. 47

Paola Turrone was born in 1971 in Monza (Italy). She attended the DAMS (Degree course in Arts, Music and Performing Arts) at the University of Bologna and the European School of Theatre and Cinema in Milan. She holds theatre, cinema and communication workshops for children, parents and teachers, with a special emphasis on relationships among cultures, women's social status and youth problems. She collaborates with several literature and cinema magazines. She has published a volume of short stories, *Due mani di colore*, Medusa, Milano 2003 (together with the poet and painter Sabrina Foscini) and the poetry collections *animale*, Fara Editore, Santarcangelo di Romagna 2000, and *Il vincolo del volo*, Raffaelli Editore, Rimini 2003. Her 'undated' piece has already been published in "Le voci della luna", 22, September 2002, p. 36.

pp. 56, 101, 104

A mistake and subscription

Here

notes from the present

In the previous issue we made a **mistake** (on page 35) by ascribing the words “death is paid for by living” to Eugenio Montale. They are, instead, verses by Giuseppe Ungaretti. The author, who is from Argentina and is not specialized in 20th century Italian poetry is pardonable. *We* are not. Please excuse us all the same.

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Last issue

Number 10, “and suddenly it’s Beslan”, February 2005 - “This issue is a diary starting from September 2004. It was written by men and women from Croatia, Argentina, Italy, Palestine, Finland and the United States, all observing what was happening in the wide world as well as in the smaller world immediately around them and even within themselves, sometimes with anguish, though not always, but also with joy, tenacious reflection, and impatient desire. The result is a sort of novel, in which diary pages appear together with an excerpt from a novel, some literary prose, reading notes, a short story and some brief essays, all belonging to the same times as well as to different ones.” *Foreword - 1st - 5th September 2004*: diary pages from Italy (Massimo Parizzi, Adriano Accattino, Maria Granati, Marosia Castaldi, Mariela De Marchi, Marina Massenz, Germana Pisa), Croatia (Drazan Gunjaca), and Finland (Hanna Snellman) - *Children of the underground*, by Marosia Castaldi - *6th - 9th September*: from Italy (Lucianna Argentino, Marosia Castaldi, Adriano Accattino, Massimo Parizzi), and Argentina (Gladys Croxatto) - *Migrations*, by Hanna Snellman - *10th - 25th September*: from Argentina (Gladys Croxatto), Italy (Adriano Accattino, Giorgio Mascitelli, Lucianna Argentino, Maria Granati, Marosia Castaldi), and Palestine (Cris) - *An unknown warrior’s confession*, by Drazan Gunjaca - *30th September - 20th October*: from Palestine (Cris, Letizia, Logan), Italy (Massimo Parizzi, Germana Pisa, Marosia Castaldi, Mariela De Marchi, Andrea Arrighi), Argentina (Gladys Croxatto, Christian Grecco), and Finland (Hanna Snellman) - *Power and weakness*, by Franco Toscani - *Mirror*, by Stefano Guglielmin - *20th - 22nd October*: from Palestine (Letizia) and Italy (Marosia Castaldi) - *Omnocracy*, by Roberto Taioli - *Michael Moore: soul orthopaedics*, by Andrea Inglese - *1st November - 26th December*: from United States (Svetlana Broz, Laura Zanetti, Keren Batiyov), Italy (Mariela De Marchi, Marosia Castaldi, Paola Turroni, Lucianna Argentino, Massimo Parizzi), Palestine (Brett Cohen), and Finland (Hanna Snellman)

Supplement to/supplemento a **Qui - appunti dal presente**, 11, June/giugno 2005.
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