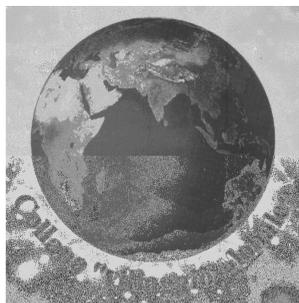


SERGIO TRIPI

# KNOWING HOW TO GIVE AND HOW TO RECEIVE

Stories and reflections on the heroes  
of the new era



CASA EDITRICE NUOVA ERA



**KNOWING HOW TO GIVE  
AND HOW TO RECEIVE**

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*I was sleeping and dreaming  
that life was pure joy;  
I awoke to see  
that life was service:  
so I served and saw  
that to serve was joy.*

*Tagore*

## Preface

Together with a humanity that is economically and socially adult, an infant humanity exists today, just as differences in maturity exist between individuals. It is the task of that part of humanity that is evolved to offer support and guidance to the part which is taking its first steps. Often this will serve to repay a debt that the evolved part has incurred in the past to the less evolved. In all cases, it will give substance to the emerging concept of one humanity, which presupposes and requires a higher sense of responsibility on the part of those who know more and have more.

Never, before today, had this sense of growing responsibility found a definite mode of being. Now, it expresses itself through the United Nations, its 32 Specialized Agencies, the thousands of non-governmental organizations and the tens of thousands of national and local groups. It is a wonderful flowering of humanity, but too often it is unrecognized or misunderstood. Yet only two generations ago it was not even conceivable that mankind could give birth to a body of such world-wide importance, and one whose aims require from the governments of its constituent countries a certain degree of altruism, a sense of responsibility towards the weaker countries, and cooperation. Only two generations ago, these ideas - at an international level - seemed a dream. Today they exist. And within two or three generations at most

they will constitute a way of thinking and being for the majority of adult humanity.

Each era has its pioneers; its heroes. People who sacrifice themselves completely because they have a clear vision of tomorrow's world and of what needs to be done to bring it into being. People who today embody the principles of the future and who, in the midst of the indifference and incomprehension of the majority, create, with self-sacrifice, the necessary basis for another step forward by humanity. In the United Nations, it is not difficult to meet such people. It is time that we got to know them.

The stories in this book about FAO, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, are based entirely on projects that have really been carried out. All the characters are real, except those in the local contexts, who are also real in a certain sense as they resemble the people I met in the villages of Africa and Central and South America.

It was my idea to write this book and I travelled at my own expense to achieve it. It was the only way I could be sure that my independence of judgement could not be doubted. However, I am deeply grateful to FAO: to Richard Lydiker, Director of the Information Division, for having constantly been a competent and available point of reference; and to the many people to whom he introduced me, both at the headquarters and in the field, without whom this book would never have been written.



## IN THE ETHIOPIAN COUNTRYSIDE

*This story does not speak of the serious drought in northern Ethiopia nor of the tremendous deaths from hunger in those regions. That is a situation which the press and the television have made known to us and it depends on the sense of responsibility of each one of us to choose how to participate in that dramatic struggle.*

*This is, on the contrary, a story that attempts to answer the question: "What next?" In fact, it is not enough to intervene in the moments when the need to save human life is most dramatic. It is also necessary to work so that those who survive can build for themselves a life worth living.*



On the first floor of the low building of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission in Addis Ababa, Seyoum Teka stared silently at the telephone on the desk. Because of the difference in time zone, in Rome it was half past four in the afternoon and as the day passed the tension he felt in waiting increased. He did not doubt that the telephone call would come, but he was not sure that the reply would be positive. He was well aware of the importance of those moments. If the application for FAO assistance, so carefully prepared in the recent months, was approved, Seyoum knew that the work of the Department that he directed, Administration of Cooperatives and Rural Settlements, would reach a significant turning point. It would in fact be able to play an important part in the economic and social reality of the Ethiopian peasants, with an effectiveness and credibility strengthened by

the backing of an expert international organization like FAO.

He remembered the hesitation of some of his colleagues when he had put forward the application for assistance. Now he was well pleased to have concluded that preparatory phase in a positive manner, to have prepared with the expert sent "in reconnaissance" from FAO an application for assistance which, objectively speaking, he did not hesitate to call professional and effective, and now he waited nervously for the telephone to ring.

The Ethiopian project was among several that were under final examination that day by the Director-General of FAO. Seyoum Taka knew well that FAO was not able to accept all the applications made to it, but he trusted that the harshness of the picture drawn in the document presented by his Government and the favourable opinion already expressed by several FAO offices would result in the project's approval under the Technical Cooperation Programme.

In a wing not far from the same building, Yebrah Mammo, Head of the Division of Administration and Training of Rural Settlements, had just finished discussing with Tafessech Ourgay, Director of the Home Economics Section, some work problems that were the result of the insufficient training of the experts in domestic economy at the new settlements.

Notwithstanding the fact that they were both the same age (thirty-five), there was evidence in the atti-

tude of Tafessech, a close collaborator of Yebrah's, of the traditional deference of the woman towards the man that is still a marked characteristic of life in this country. Not that Tafessech thought that she was worth less than Yebrah: she knew well that her long and deep experience in the field had given her an ability to understand situations and problems that probably her chief Yebrah had not been able to develop in his years at the headquarters. In fact, the two complemented each other: Yebrah had a broad view of the situation and Tafessech a direct experience and first-hand understanding of the same problems. Yebrah glanced at his watch and frowned.

Tafessech was silent for a few seconds and then said:

"Mr. Teka should have already called by now."

Yebrah was also a little worried but he did not want to show it. He said:

"You know how these things go. They might talk until late in the evening in order to choose the projects to go ahead with. And anyway, in Rome it's not five o'clock yet. There's still time."

Tafessech gathered her papers together and returned to her office. This waiting tired her. She re-examined the work programme that would take her in the next two weeks to the settlements in the south of the country, and remembered for a moment the faces of her co-workers in that area, with whom she would re-examine the progress made and the difficulties encountered in their attempts to make the lives of the

village women a little less hard and a little more meaningful.

It was almost six o'clock when Tafessech returned to Yebrah's office, who with a glance invited her to come in.

"Nothing yet?" asked Tafessech.

"Nothing yet," replied Yebrah.

Tafessech sat down in front of him at the desk and they remained silent; they could hardly believe that the work of so many months now depended on a telephone call. The telephone rang and Yebrah Mammo lifted the receiver to his ear while the first ring was still echoing in the room. He listened attentively for a few seconds, then replaced the receiver and said, smiling:

"The project has been approved. Mr. Teka is waiting for us. Let's go."

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The Tura family lived in one of the *tukuls* on the southern side of the village of Golgòta, which is about two hundred kilometres to the east of Addis Ababa.

The colours of dawn were rapidly becoming more intense and to the east the dark sky was retreating fast. Ahmedo Tura left his straw pallet, looked at his wife, who was poking the fire, and went out of the *tukul*

without making any noise. He went into the animals' enclosure, milked the cow (with a calf around, not much milk was left) and threw some crumbs to the hen and the chickens. He did this with slow movements and the expression on his face betrayed a detachment, or rather a lack of interest in what he was doing. In fact, Ahmedo was strongly of the opinion that not he, but his wife, should have done this job. It took away from the little time he had for breakfast and made it necessary for him to walk faster to reach the cotton field where he would pass the day. On the other hand, with water to fetch half an hour's walk away, his wife had to go out immediately after him and so the animals would have had to wait too long, above all the cow, if his wife had been the one to look after them, on her return.

Ahmedo went back into the *tukul* and crouched near the fire to eat *injira*, a kind of bread fritter, and drink coffee. His three children were up and the eldest, Bekele, aged thirteen, waited his turn to have breakfast and then go with his father to work in the field. When Ahmedo got up, Bekele crouched in the place where his father had been a moment before and ate with gusto the breakfast his mother silently gave him.

"We'll expect you with the lunch, then," said Ahmedo to his wife Beletech. And she replied tiredly:

"Yes, as usual."

Ahmedo left the *tukul* and began to walk along the path, followed by his son Bekele. As he did almost

every morning, after a while Bebele began to walk faster and passed his father by. Walking ahead, he amused himself by walking zig-zag along the path and now and then striking the bushes with a stick. And Ahmedo, as he did every day, observed his son attentively, watching the slow process of his becoming a man and imagining the day when his help in the fields would be substantial.

Ahmedo cast his mind back three years to a time when their situation was so different... Then they were living more to the north and the area had been struck by drought. For people like them, peasants without land, finding a little work was already a perennial difficulty, but at that time it had become more or less impossible. At home there was really nothing left; the bag of *scero*, the bean or pea meal which is the basis of every dish in the Ethiopian countryside, had been empty for several days and the left-overs, of any kind, had been finished two days before. He remembered clearly the morning when, as now, Bekele had been walking ahead of him and at a certain point had turned round, stopped and said:

"Daddy, we didn't eat yesterday or the day before. If we don't eat today, when might we die?"

At those words, Ahmedo had felt something like a whiplash on his back and, looking hard at his son, had replied:

"We are not going to die of hunger; you'll see, we will eat this evening."

That period had been hard, very hard (he said it himself, and his life had certainly never been easy) but today, some years later, the situation was decidedly better. In spite of the fact that he was now thirty-five years old, he had agreed to move 300 kilometres to the southeast, to Golgòta (but could he have ever refused?) and to live in that new settlement which had been organized by the Government for families in similar circumstances and in which most of the work was done for the community. A good worker, he quite liked the system of having a piece of land assigned to his family (at last!), but to be maintained and cultivated for the community, because the work was assessed in points and those who worked harder or better received more points. These points served to ensure that they had the basic necessities; and then there was also the vegetable garden behind the house that had been assigned to him for his own family and which he could cultivate for himself. Sooner or later, especially when Bekele was able to help him properly, he intended to dedicate himself to the vegetable garden too and in this way get that little extra that could make life so much more pleasant ...

When they reached the cotton plantation half an hour later, the sun was already warming the air, but the irrigation water was still pretty cold after the night. In that period, the work consisted of improving and extending the irrigation system, and thus preparing for the enlargement of the plantation. They arrived at the place assigned to them, took two long poles from

behind a bush and went down immediately along the canal to begin work (the only advantage of not having shoes was that they were able to begin the job straight away and did not have any problems when they finished). With much determination they deepened the furrows between the lines of small cotton plants, thus allowing the canal water to penetrate better into the cultivated area and to reach the proper depth in that section. Despite the fact that they put a lot of effort into it, the work went ahead slowly because it was not easy to make the water follow the furrows that they were marking out with their poles, without overflowing. Often it was necessary to strengthen the sides of the canal in the stretches between two furrows to prevent the water from flowing directly over the little plants.

They worked the whole morning in silence: Ahmedo firmly marked out the first furrows and immediately afterwards Bekele widened and consolidated them. With the passing of the hours, the heat had become very intense and Ahmedo felt the sun beating down on him, especially on his back and the nape of his neck.

"That's one of the things I'll buy for myself when I can work in the vegetable garden and sell something at the market," he thought, "one of those big straw hats with a wide brim. It must be really nice to work carrying the shade around with you."

When the sun was directly overhead, Ahmedo began to feel the tiredness in his loins and back and he couldn't wait for his wife to arrive for the lunch break.

If Ahmedo's morning was hard, his wife Beletech's was certainly no less so; on the contrary ... After her husband and son had gone, Beletech gave her other two children something for breakfast. They were Yeshi, a lively little girl of eleven, and Tolosa, a rather delicate little boy of nine. Then she went and cleaned out the animal enclosure; When she had finished, she handed over the cow and the calf to Yeshi and Tolosa so that they could take them out to graze. Then she went back into the *tukul* and swept the floor, chasing out the hen and her chickens that had come in to peck at the crumbs left over from breakfast. Then she took the big water container and set off for the well.

She didn't mind that morning walk all that much (when she wasn't pregnant) on the way to the well; on the way back, the weight of the container, now filled with enough water for the day, made it a different matter. It was not only the weight of the water that bothered her but also the fact that, with the weight, her bare feet felt the roughness of the ground all the more.

"Beletech, wait for me, we can walk together!" She turned and saw her neighbour running towards her. They walked on together at a good pace and, as had often happened in recent weeks, Beletech had to

put up with her neighbour's outbursts against her husband; she complained of how badly he had begun to treat her and of how he neglected her. Beletech was not the sort of person to share confidences of that kind, but she herself was going through a difficult period with Ahmedo. After six pregnancies and with three quite big children, she felt that her husband desired her less than he used to. Yet this wasn't what caused her pain; she knew well that at Ahmedo's age sexual desire was much less intense than during the early years of married life. What made her really unhappy was the feeling that, now that the children had grown older, he considered her presence in the house and in the family as mechanical, to be taken for granted and without importance.

"And yet I do many things during the day," thought Beletech. "Is it possible that he doesn't realize that everything would be a shambles if I stopped?"

Her neighbour talked on and on, and on, but Beletech hardly heard her. This neighbour of hers was the sort of person who doesn't need a listener in order to give vent to her feelings, but needs only the physical presence of a pair of ears, even if they aren't listening. In fact, Beletech was not listening to her any longer. She had started to think of the day of her own wedding, as she often did when she felt sad.

"And yet," she thought, "everything had started so well! Our marriage was one of the very first in the village that had not been wished for and agreed upon beforehand by the parents. We had chosen one

another. And what a party there was when we got married! My God, what a blow it was for my father, and what a lot of debts he had to run up!"

Yes, the wedding had been a real success and her family had cut a fine figure in the village. In addition to a sum of money, she had as her dowry some dresses and a few pairs of shoes, two of which were presents for Ahmedo's parents. From Ahmedo she had received the ring, a necklace with a cross and some clothes for herself. All the guests had admired these presents and the party had gone on almost until the evening. The guests had eaten such a lot that they would remember it for a good while afterwards.

Beletech was torn from her memories by her talkative friend who was saying insistently:

"Don't you think so? Don't you think so?"

"Don't I think what?" Beletech asked back. And her friend replied:

"Don't you think that they should treat us better, that they should appreciate a bit more all the things we do from morning till night? After all, it seems to me that we work harder than they do!"

Beletech nodded, muttering a few words of solidarity to her friend. But her mind tended to wander far away. She now recalled the most difficult periods of her married life and almost saw before her eyes the features of the three babies who had died before they were a year old. She hardly ever let that thought penetrate her consciousness; when she felt it coming, by an act of will she let a wall of indifference drop around

her like armour, which isolated her from that wave of memories and prevented her from suffering from them. She did this unconsciously, defending herself in the atavistic way to which her people had forcibly become accustomed: by blotting out the memory.

"How nice it is to have three children, now quite big!" she thought. "Now that Yeshe and Tolosa look after the animals in the morning, I have stopped getting up at five. And since Bekele has started to help Ahmedo in the fields, we have scraped together a few more points."

They arrived at the well and were lucky to find only a short queue. After they had filled their water containers, Beletech set off on the return journey in silence and soon after her friend also stopped talking: the weight was making itself felt and they had to be careful where they put their feet.

After returning home and putting the water near the fire, Beletech went out again to collect firewood. When she had collected enough, she returned to the *tukul* and lit the fire. First she cooked a little *injira* (there was none left over from breakfast) and began to prepare the *scerowat*: she mixed the *scero* with water, added onion sauce and pepper and put the pot on the fire. When the food was ready, she took part of it and set out for the cotton plantation.

The arrival of lunch was a moment when Ahmedo was particularly glad to see her. Today, too, raising his head and noticing her on the other side of the canal, he smiled, greeted her with a wave of his

hand and called his son. They went over to meet her and sat down on the canal bank, where she gave them their lunch. Bekele, as usual, ate his greedily. Ahmedo, on the other hand, chewed slowly and looked with satisfaction at the new network of little canals that allowed the water to penetrate more deeply into the plantation.

"On Wednesday there's the market," said Beletech. "We should try to go. I need a piece of material to patch Bekele's and Yeshi's trousers; they're all full of holes."

"Alright, let's go," said Ahmedo, "in fact, I'll stop work two hours before sunset so that we won't arrive there too late and I'll be able to play a game of cards with my friends."

Beletech didn't reply. "It's always the same old story," she thought, "we'll all go together, then he'll go off to the bar to drink and play cards and I'll have to drag the children behind me and try to sell some dried beans to buy that piece of material. And I'll also have to try to barter something for a little salt, otherwise who will be the first to notice when I bring him something unsalted? And in the end it will be quite something if he even comes back home with us." She picked up the empty basket and said aloud:

"Well, I'll go." With a nod she set off for home.

When she got back to the *tukul*, she gave some food to Yeshi and Tolosa, who in the meantime had come home for lunch. After the two children had eaten, she sent them out again with the cow and the

calf to find grazing and then sat down on the ground by the fire-place to eat the food that was left. Then she cleaned the pot and the brazier. After that, she went behind the hut and squatted down to grind grain for a couple of hours. When she saw that it was nearly sunset she went back into the house and made coffee for Ahmedo, who would be returning soon.

"Mmmm, just think, I could smell coffee even before I reached the turning and saw the house." Ahmedo's voice surprised her and she turned round, greeted him and gave him a glass full of coffee.

"How did it go?" asked Beletech.

Ahmedo replied: "Better in the afternoon. The ground was softer so we were able to do more." He drank a long draught of coffee and continued:

"But the sun beats down hard on you. One day I'm going to buy myself a hat."

"And how is Bekele managing?" asked Beletech.

"Not at all badly. He's coming on, that boy."

"Well, I'll go and get firewood for supper," said Beletech.

"Alright," replied Ahmedo, "I'll shut up the animals when they arrive."

Beletech went out and headed for the southern exit of the village. She knew that now it was necessary to go quite far from home if she wanted to find the right kind of wood, and enough of it, for burning. She needed fairly big branches as well as twigs. Wood gathering, between going, cutting and collecting it, and coming back, now took her about an hour.

As soon as she got home she lit the fire and started to get supper ready. Now and again one of the children came into the *tukul* and approached the fire-place, but Beletech sent them out again firmly saying

“Wait a moment! Be patient for a moment!”

When supper was ready, Ahmedo sat down on the ground beside the fire-place and Beletech served him. When he had finished and had gone out to smoke, the three children sat down in their turn and devoured what was left.

“This is an evening when my stomach will rumble,” thought Beletech, who had eaten a few mouthfuls while she was making supper but would now have gladly had a little more. Perhaps also because her stomach was still half empty, Beletech felt that she could still do a little more work and so, after she had cleaned the pot and the fire-place, she sat out in the open and began to plait straw for a basket. On Wednesday she would barter it at the market for some salt and some coffee, which were almost finished.

It was a beautiful night. There was a slight breeze that made one forget the heat of the day. The sky was very dark and the stars glittered against it so intensely that they seemed artificial. Now it was almost cold. One after another the children went back into the *tukul* and lay down in their sleeping places. Ahmedo also went back inside and lay down in the large, high sleeping place in the centre of the hut. It was because of the difference in height of these sleeping places that Ahmedo and Beletech were able to have a little inti-

macy: sleeping at a higher level, they could see the children by raising themselves slightly and, with a little care, they could shield themselves from the curious eyes of the older children.

After about half an hour, she heard Ahmedo call her from the hut:

“Beletech, it’s late, come and sleep.”

She looked at the basket, which had now begun to take shape, and realized that she would be able to finish it in time for the market on Wednesday. She put down her work, blew out the light and went into the hut. She went up to the children and touched them, one after another, on the forehead and then lay down herself beside her husband.

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Elisabeth Allen, a tall, well-built woman of about thirty-five years of age, with intelligent eyes and a very interesting face, looked up from the report that she was rereading and looked at the rain that was beating on the windows of her office on the fourth floor of building ‘B’ of FAO in Rome. It was Friday afternoon and the weather looked very unpromising for the weekend.

“What a pity,” she thought, “I had really been looking forward to this weekend, and I think I deserve a couple of days of rest, without meetings, or travel-

ling, or reports to write. With this weather, the sea is out of the question. Pity." And she started again to read the report that she was correcting.

Elisabeth Allen had certainly not entered FAO by chance. She was born in a little village in Nebraska, in the middle of the United States and, perhaps because of this, she had shown, since she was a little girl, a strong interest in what happened in different parts of the world. At school she had been very interested in geography and later in sociology, and what she had enjoyed watching most were documentaries from other continents.

After finishing college, she had joined the 4H Association (the four Hs stand for head, heart, health and hands). This association has among its objectives the encouragement of acquaintanceship and friendship between young people from the rural areas of the world. It was with this organization that Elisabeth had left the small agricultural village in Nebraska and had lived for a year in New Zealand. "Shearing sheep, milking cows and giving talks on the way of life in Nebraska," Elisabeth often remembered. She smiled at the thought that she had learnt a lot more about the agriculture of Nebraska in New Zealand, when she had had to gather detailed information on cultivation methods and fertilizers, than she had in the years spent at home. After that, having had a similar experience in India, she had returned to the United States and had enrolled for a degree course in international journalism in the State of Ohio. And

at the end of the first year of the course, she had had a third experience abroad with the 4H Association, this time in Japan.

Naturally, going to countries so far away and living for a time in the midst of different cultures and populations had been a very meaningful experience for Elisabeth, which had strengthened her desire to get to know other countries more in depth. And if, on the one hand, her experience in New Zealand and Japan had stimulated her interest in far-away peoples even more, her experience in India had begun to generate in her the desire to work in aid of those countries that were still in the process of development. From this point of view, the degree course that she had chosen was certainly in line with the ideas and the sensitivity that she had been developing in her last years of secondary school. Towards the end of that course of studies, Elisabeth had received a very important letter from a friend of hers who was also a member of "4H". He wrote to her from Washington to tell her that FAO had advertised a post suitable for a young woman with a degree and experience of rural life. The job would be concerned with promoting the development of agricultural communities in Third World countries.

Nothing happens by chance. Those characteristics corresponded very well with the maturity and experience Elisabeth could offer. After all, the periods she had spent abroad and her own origins were exactly in line with a work programme centred on new agricultural communities. So Elisabeth had written to FAO

and applied for the post. It was December when she had written for the first time to FAO, and at the time Elisabeth thought that, if all went well, she would begin a new working life the following spring.

Her faith had been a little shaken when she had come to learn that there had been about a hundred applications for the position, but nevertheless Elisabeth had not lost hope: she knew she had all the necessary qualifications and, above all, she felt growing within her all the time the conviction that her willingness to work for distant countries which were in difficulty would not be disappointed.

She had been right to hope for the best: in June she had been accepted by FAO. But what a wait and what anxiety for that young graduate from Nebraska, so willing to serve her neighbour on the international scene! The time had dragged on also because, as an American citizen, Elisabeth needed the authorization of the FBI to join an international organization. And Elisabeth, in Ohio, where she had begun to work in the public relations field, had been constantly informed of the investigations made about her by the FBI. This is not surprising: if someone comes to a small village of 400 souls in the countryside of Nebraska and begins to talk about you with your neighbours and your old teachers, it is obvious that something is afoot and the news spreads quickly.

In the case of Elisabeth, the FBI authorization had needed more time to come through than usual because she had lived abroad for several periods and

the FBI had also asked for information about her from the American embassies in those countries where she had lived. In the end, after six months, everything had been concluded positively and Elisabeth had received a letter telling her that she had got the job, with the request to move immediately to Rome.

At the beginning, Elisabeth had been almost overwhelmed by her new life. After a few hours' flight she had arrived in Rome and there had had her first contact with Europe, with that European culture that had been developing, century after century, over the last three thousand years. And there Elisabeth had also had her first contact with a Specialized Agency of the United Nations, that is, FAO. She was probably the youngest of its officials, but sustained, indeed driven, by her passionate idealism, she had plunged into the work with great enthusiasm. She was anxious to be able to contribute soon and tangibly to the progress of the developing countries that FAO assisted in the areas of agriculture and nutrition.

However, the encounter with and adaptation to a large organization made up of many parts, such as FAO, and above all the deeper awareness of the big world problems confronted by this organization were bound to make her understand, little by little, the meaning of the English proverb "Rome was not build in a day". In those years of work, Elisabeth had visited many countries, especially African ones, and this experience, made up of dramatic situations of people struggling daily against hunger, had strengthened her

determination to dedicate herself and her time totally to this work.

In this way ten years had passed, during which Elisabeth had worked with courage and dedication for that ideal of brotherhood among the peoples of the world in which she had begun to believe since she was a child. Her private life, however, had suffered as a result. It was difficult for her to make real friends among people who were not connected with her work. She found it impossible to spend time talking of many subjects, even interesting ones, without her thoughts turning also to the international situation and the conditions of the developing countries, and how desirable it would be for the western world to develop a greater sense of responsibility towards them.

But outside the world of her own work, the people who shared these thoughts and this constant awareness of hers were really rare. It was difficult to find people aware, even partly aware, of the dramatic situations that Elisabeth had learnt to know profoundly; above all, it was difficult to find people willing to consider that subject for more than a few minutes. It was as if a kind of unconscious mental defence sprang up in people that kept the knowledge of these dramatic situations below the level of awareness, thus preventing most of them from feeling their weight and a sense of responsibility for them.

This was partly the reason why, for the last two and a half years, Elisabeth had left FAO on study leave (without pay) and had done her doctorate at the

University of Harvard. Now, with a thesis on female participation in agricultural reforms, for which she had obtained full marks, her excellent academic preparation could well be considered complete, and she was happy to be back at her work in Rome.

Elisabeth looked out of the window again with a disappointed air. Now it was raining even harder and the weekend seemed less and less promising. The door of her little office opened and Elisabeth's immediate superior, Moad Thulin, walked in smiling and asked jokingly:

"Hello, Elisabeth, are you getting ready for a weekend in the hot Italian sun?"

"Mmmm, yes, indeed. Flat shoes, umbrella and raincoat: the most that we can look forward to is a walk in the rain."

Dr. Thulin sat down in front of Elisabeth said to her:

"It's time for us to speak a little more in depth about the project for Ethiopia. Now that the project has been approved and we have found the necessary funds, the moment has come to get the expert we have recruited for this job to come to Rome. She'll be the one who will live for six months in the villages, in close contact with the women and their families, sharing their everyday life; and the one who will plan training courses for the Ethiopian social assistants on the basis of what she has observed."

"Who is this expert?" asked Elisabeth.

"She's from The Philippines. Her name is Isabel Tagumpay. I think she's just the right woman for this task. She's about forty-five, but she seems ten years younger, both in appearance and in the sustained pace at which she works. She's had twenty years' direct experience in The Philippines with the Philippine Agricultural Extension Service. She joined the service immediately after graduating in agriculture. During those twenty years of work she found the time and energy to do many things: she won a prize for the professional quality of her work, which gave her the opportunity to live and acquire experience in Korea, Japan and Taiwan; she followed post-university courses in agricultural communications; she returned to Japan for a nine-month course on mushroom cultivation; and she attended various seminars on agricultural reform and nutrition. After leaving the service in The Philippines, Isabel Tagumpay went to Yemen for two years as a United Nations Volunteer and took part in agricultural programmes for women. She comes from a liberal, progressive family, she isn't married and she has dedicated herself completely to this kind of work. What do you think of that?"

"What an interesting life story!" said Elisabeth. "When are we going to see her?"

"She's coming to Rome from Yemen in two weeks' time. We'll speak to her together and we'll give her a general run-down on her task in Ethiopia. I'm glad that you've come back from Harvard in time for this project, my dear Dr. Allen. You will be the coordi-

nator of this project; the time has come for me to retire."

"Have you decided what you will do and where you will go?" asked Elisabeth.

"I shall go back to Sweden, my dear. Who knows what effect it will have on me to go back and live there after twenty years! I think I shall write, I shall contribute to some publications: I can't see myself in the role of an inactive pensioner!"

"Moad ...," said Elisabeth in a slightly deeper tone of voice, "thank you for all that you have taught me."

"It has been a joy to do so, Elisabeth; and I'm happy to know that you are here. I know that you will continue to do a good job."

The two women were silent for a few moments, and Elisabeth thought with admiration of the modest and extremely concise way in which Moad had introduced the subject of the Ethiopian project. "Now that the project has been approved ...": with these words Moad had condensed months and months of preparation, of study, of work in convincing the Ethiopian Government. It couldn't have been easy, thought Elisabeth, to make them accept the goal of developing the role of women in rural families. She said aloud:

"Moad, you haven't told me yet how you managed to convince the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission in Addis Ababa that, to improve living conditions in the agricultural communities, it is necessary first of all to improve the training and the role of the village women."

Moad smiled and said:

"I'll tell you, I don't know that I would have succeeded if I hadn't been able to count on the understanding and full support of the man in charge of the Administration of Cooperatives and Rural Settlements Department. Seyoum Teka, that's his name, was my ally from the beginning, and he fought within the Commission to assert the priority of this programme. In the end, the project was officially requested by the Ethiopian Government with the objectives and the statement of motives that we had jointly prepared during my various trips down there. Our office in Ethiopia was also of great help in the preparation of the document. I think that now a really good job can be done."

"I am ready," said Elisabeth, "what do you advise me to do to start with?"

"Read the official document that we have circulated among the various FAO departments for the approval of the project within the Technical Cooperation Programme. Then start gathering together all the documentation that you find on projects of the same kind carried out in other African countries. And then jot down a rough programme that can serve as a frame of reference for the Philippine expert: we'll look at it again next Friday and agree on a final version, and then we'll discuss it with Isabel Tagumpay the following week. Alright?"

"Certainly!" said Elisabeth.

"Well, have a nice weekend, see you on Monday."

"And the same to you, Moad, till Monday."

After Dr. Thulin had left, Elisabeth got ready to leave the office. She put her papers back in her desk, closed the drawers, took her umbrella from beside the door and set off towards the lift. Almost everyone had already left a good half-hour before and Elisabeth met only a few colleagues, whom she greeted with a resigned "Have a nice weekend" and a gesture towards the pelting rain that beat on the asphalt in front of the entrance hall. She opened her umbrella and set off at a fast pace for home.

Elisabeth had been really lucky to find a flat to rent in a road adjacent to the San Saba slope, about a quarter of an hour's walk from the FAO offices. Naturally, when she arrived home she was rather wet. She put her umbrella and raincoat to dry and took off her wet shoes. Then she switched on the record player and put a Rachmaninoff concerto for piano and orchestra on the turn-table. Then she skimmed through the post that she had collected on her way up. Without opening them, she threw away two bulky envelopes on which were written in several colours things like "Open this at once! You could have already won a hundred million in gold tokens!" With a smile, she put on one side a letter from Nebraska and read the note from her friend and companion on the Italian course. The few lines read:

"Dear Elisabeth, no sun - no sea - no outing. We have an invitation for tomorrow evening at Franco's house; he's giving a party to celebrate, what or whom I haven't quite understood. I have also accepted for you but if you don't want to come, ring me. I'm planning to come and collect you tomorrow evening at half past seven. Be seeing you, Anne."

The idea of a party never excited her very much but, considering the weather, this improved the prospects for the weekend. She sat down in an armchair and opened the letter from Nebraska. Elisabeth smiled while reading the small items of news, so dear to her, about the world she had left behind at home. The letter went on:

"Elisabeth, when you write to us, don't speak only about your work; tell us about yourself too, about the people you see, about your friendships and your admirers... You must also think a little of yourself, child. The years are passing and I am beginning to be impatient to become a grandmother ..."

"This," thought Elisabeth, "is becoming a fixation of hers! Oh Mummy!" She relaxed against the back of the armchair, put her legs on the sofa, closed her eyes and let herself go to the moving notes of the piano.

The next evening, Elisabeth went to the party with every intention of being carefree, of enjoying herself and meeting new people. When she arrived, the host came up to her and greeted her affectionately:

"Hello, Elisabeth, what a long time it is since I saw you! How are your trips round the world going?"

"Oh, they continue, they continue," replied Elisabeth, "and you, what's your news?"

"Nothing worth talking about. Come, I'll introduce you to some new people."

They went into the drawing-room and Elisabeth greeted old acquaintances and made new ones. Among the latter, one in particular made her feel less sure of herself than usual: Stefano Petri, taller than her by a good half head and with widely-spaced, light-coloured eyes, short hair and a dark tan. He had a deep, decisive voice and he struck her immediately. More than once, while in conversation with that group of friends, Stefano attracted her glance. After a while he invited her over to the buffet to try a cocktail he had invented.

"To the two of us!" said Stefano and the crystal glasses gave out a clear note. Sitting a little away from the crowd, they sipped their drinks in silence for a few moments. Then Stefano asked:

"Elisabeth, tell me about yourself, tell me who you are, what you do. I want to get to know you."

"Well, it's a gap that can soon be filled. There's not a lot to say about me. I'm not Italian, and everyone knows this as soon as I open my mouth in your language. I am American, I come from a small town in Nebraska, and after finishing my studies I began to get interested in the problems of the Third World. And so, I've been working at FAO for the last ten years." (While she was speaking, a voice inside her said to

her: "But do you really have to be always so concise when you speak of yourself! How can he understand the world in which you live from these few words?" At the same time, another part of her replied: "But what else can I say of myself and my work, when it would take hours to explain the problems of that Third World for which I am trying to do something?").

However, Stefano was not satisfied with such a concise description and he knew how to persist tactfully. And so Elisabeth told him of her youthful experiences abroad and of her determination to work for a better, more balanced and more responsible world. While she voiced these ideas, her eyes lit up with a beautiful light and expressed the hope, courage and determination that had impelled and sustained her in her hard work for all those years. Then Elisabeth said:

"Now I'll ask you the same question. Tell me about yourself, who you are and what you want."

Stefano smiled and replied:

"I can't say anything as interesting as you have said. I'm the Marketing Director in an insurance company. I like outdoor life; contact with nature. I like skiing very much. The mountains attract me ... I'd like to do some mountain climbing, but I haven't tried it yet."

"But your work, now, what does it consist of?" asked Elisabeth.

"Selling security. I find out what people's uncertainties and fears are, I design policies that respond to these needs and I present them in the most convincing way possible. In a certain-sense, one could say that I too work to solve social problems!"

Elisabeth was silent for a few moments and then asked: "What else do you like to do in life?"

"Travel. Yes, travel to observe, to get to know, to understand. Do you like travelling?"

"Yes," answered Elisabeth, "in my job I have to travel a lot and, if I didn't like it, it would be a serious problem. But tell me about some of your trips."

"Well, among the many, and there really have been many, there were two that really impressed me, and that I remember as significant experiences in my life. One was a photographic safari that I did in Kenya three years ago. A marvellous trip, nature beyond all description. And the other, a wonderful tour of the Far East; you know, Thailand, Sri Lanka and the Maldiva Islands. Ah, what marvellous places. You know them, I imagine."

"Yes, I know them, they're really beautiful. And the people there? Tell me, what did you think of the people in those places?" Elisabeth's voice betrayed a slight nervousness, as though she was waiting for something, but Stefano did not notice it. He replied:

"Well, you know, it's not easy to meet the people of the place when you go on these organized tours, and with the time that is always limited ... As a matter of fact, you're right, I know what you think: one gets to

know more the place that one visits and one ends up neglecting the people who live there. In Thailand I was able to see the people a little closer at hand. I saw those who went to the temples and those who organize their small businesses around them. One thing was surprisingly beautiful to see: perhaps you'll be astonished, it was a funeral."

Elisabeth nodded and said:

"Yes, it's surprising to see the serenity that they manage to maintain in the face of death. It must be a mixture of religious belief and the awareness that, in most cases, death is, after all, the end of a life of hardship."

Stefano's look had become serious and a line furrowed his brow. He said:

"Yes, it's true, what a lot of poverty there is in those places! Sometimes the thought really bothered me that the price of my dinner in a good restaurant was equal to the monthly wage of the waiter serving at my table... "

"Ah, you thought that?" Elisabeth's voice betrayed a slight expectation of something. And Stefano said: "Yes, it's a painful thought, isn't it? It certainly doesn't encourage you to enjoy your well-earned holidays after a year's work. But then, what can we do about it? You and I can't change the world!"

"Ah no, my dear fellow!" Elisabeth reacted vehemently. "That amounts to putting your head in the sand! Who is to change the world if not us? Who is to feel the responsibility if not us? Who is to meet

the eyes of that waiter while he serves us at table, if not us? Don't you think it's too easy to come to that conclusion?"

Stefano was not surprised by Elisabeth's reaction; after all, it was to be expected. What did surprise him was the defensive shield which he felt rising up inside him all of a sudden and made him say:

"But Elisabeth, it's not a question of putting one's head in the sand, it's a question of being able to look at reality. Ordinary people, like you and me, those who make what is today called public opinion, haven't got the power to change things... it would be wonderful to be able to change the world, to get rid of injustice, but one would need a magic wand ..." But where is this subject taking us, here, on Saturday evening? Here, let's fill our glasses and drink."

He handed her a glass and said: "What shall we drink to?"

"If you don't mind, I shall drink to the public opinion that made a war end in Vietnam," said Elisabeth, putting her glass directly to her lips.

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At nine o'clock in the morning on the day of the meeting with the Philippine consultant Isabel Tagumpay, Elisabeth was in Dr. Moad Thulin's office and together they had got the documents and notes

ready for the discussion. A faint knock was heard and Elisabeth opened the door.

"Good morning, I am Isabel Tagumpay."

"Welcome, I am Elisabeth Allen and this is Dr. Moad Thulin," replied Elisabeth with a smile.

While they were shaking hands, Elisabeth was struck by the delicate appearance of the young oriental woman. Her hair was gathered at the nape of her neck and her gaze was so clear, profound and calm that it seemed to make time stand still. They sat down round the work table and spoke for a few minutes about Isabel's journey to Rome and about her hotel accommodation. Then Moad introduced the Ethiopian work programme.

"As you know," Moad spoke in a clear, calm voice, "Ethiopia is one of the countries that the United Nations classifies as least developed. It has a population of about thirty-two million, of which 90 percent live in the rural areas. The great majority of the population is made up of peasants who hardly manage to satisfy their basic needs. For some years the Ethiopian Government and the United Nations Development Programme have been dealing with the serious problems caused by population density in certain areas, by archaic methods of cultivation, by soil erosion, and in some areas by the dramatic situation brought about by drought. With this programme, the Government has established about eighty rural settlements for about forty thousand families. This has meant a considerable improvement in the lives of

about two hundred thousand people who, before that, had struggled simply in order not to die. The plans for the next ten years include the opening of at least six new settlements a year, each for about five hundred families.

"That means another hundred and fifty or two hundred thousand people, making a total, according to some less conservative estimates, of about half a million farmers," said Elisabeth.

"A really considerable effort," commented Isabel. Moad continued:

"The Ethiopian body responsible for this programme is the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission. Their aim is to make the peasants in these settlements self-sufficient both as regards food as well as social services. Each village is provided with schools, a medical dispensary, a water supply and food stores. In addition, they are provided with technical services for the introduction of better methods of cultivation and livestock raising. But these endeavours are not sufficient to resolve a situation as difficult as the one in Ethiopia. The Government is now convinced that the most significant step, or one of the most significant, for the future, is that of giving more importance to the role and contribution of half the population, neglected up to now: the women. And it is here that our department goes into action, and it is here, Isabel, that your role becomes very important. The frame of reference for your work in Ethiopia in the next six months - this period can, if necessary, be extended by

another six months - is set out in the six points of this document that we are going to read and discuss together this morning."

Moad handed a typed sheet to Isabel who took it and said:

"If you don't mind, before going through each point, I'd like to read it quickly to have an overall picture."

Moad nodded with a smile of understanding and Isabel concentrated on reading the document. It read as follows:

"FAO: Technical Cooperation Programme

Terms of reference for the FAO consultant:

To assist the Department for Administration of Cooperatives and Rural Settlements in the strengthening of the structure and functioning of the Home Economics Section, at every level.

To develop training programmes for external personnel at national, regional, and village levels; such programmes will be centred on the improvement of the conditions of the women and the families in the villages, and in particular on the role and contribution of the women to the development of the rural settlement projects.

To provide orientation and guidance for the personnel of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, particularly for those in charge of sections and divisions, on subjects concerning the integration of women in the rural settlements; to develop training programmes for those in charge of the Women's Associations, especially on how they can actively participate in planning the local production of food for family consumption and on how, after receiving this training, they can become active participants in primary production cooperatives.

To impart the above-mentioned training programmes by means of short courses, forming part of a broader general training programme, and to assess the results.

To prepare the guidelines for training programmes and activities that make for the full integration of women in the rural settlements, including an equal opportunity to have access to productive resources and to use and develop their working capacities.

To prepare a plan for the continuation of the activities and projects."

Isabel read this document attentively and when she raised her head from the sheet her eyes shone.

"What an interesting programme," she said in a quiet voice, without emphasis. This was in open

contrast with her look, which showed her keen human and professional interest.

The three women analysed and discussed the six points of the programme for the whole morning. At about one o'clock they went up to the top floor of "C" building for a bite to eat in the canteen. While they were eating, Isabel asked:

"What is the structure of the Home Economics Section of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission?"

Moad replied: "In Addis Ababa, within the RRC, there's the Director of the Section, Tafessech Ourgay, with two assistants. The country is divided into eight areas of responsibility, each of which has a coordinator. At village level there are, in the whole of Ethiopia, thirty Home Economics Agents who work on the spot through the Women's Associations. Certainly, Isabel, one of your tasks will be to assess this structure and see what needs to be done to make it more adequate to meet the considerable present and future requirements."

"And Tafessech Ourgay, the Director of the Section, what's she like?" asked Isabel.

Moad replied: "She's a very capable woman, between thirty and thirty-five, with a long experience behind her. For the Home Economics Agents, Taffy (that's her nickname) is not only the Director, she is also a sister and a mother to them. Taffy is a tireless worker, she travels from one end of the country to the other listening to the problems of her co-workers, sug-

gesting solutions without ever imposing them, winning confidence and recognition of her experience everywhere. "

"The idea that I have after studying the situation," said Elisabeth, "is that the right approach to teaching new things to the Ethiopian village women consists of improving the training and the structure of the Home Economics Section and thus intervening through its Agents, who can learn directly from the village women the needs and problems of their lives "

"You're right," said Isabel, "in this way we will obtain the double advantage of being able to carry on an intensive series of courses at the same time in different parts of the country and of getting advice and innovations accepted without reserve or prejudice in the villages, as they will be proposed by their own people."

"Coffee for everyone?" asked Elisabeth, getting up.

"I'd prefer a cup of tea, please," said Isabel.

While Elisabeth was waiting at the counter, she heard a voice behind her saying: "Hello, Elisabeth, weren't you supposed to be in Ethiopia?"

Elisabeth turned round to reply to the middle-aged man who was looking at her and smiling.

"Miguel Herrera!" she said, "what are you doing here? Have you decided to get yourself transferred to headquarters?"

The Spaniard answered with a slight smile: "No, no, it's only for a short period. I don't think that life at

headquarters is for me. I am one of those who are happy in the field, in the front line."

"How long are you staying in Rome?" asked Elisabeth.

"A few weeks, to go into some aspects of the project I'm working on in Peru."

"And then you're going back there?"

"Yes, I'm going back, to the mountains, to the *campesinos* who are waiting for me. And what about you?"

"Ah!" said Elisabeth with a sigh. "I'm doing more desk work than I like. But in the autumn I expect to go to Ethiopia and, before Decemer, I'll have to go to Pakistan for two weeks. There, too, there's a lot that can be done for rural women."

"Shall we have lunch together one of these days?" asked Miguel.

"With pleasure, keep in touch!" said Elisabeth and then she went back to her table with a tray in her hands.

The three women, slowly sipping the coffee and tea, relaxed for a few minutes talking about one thing and another. Then Moad said:

"Well, it's time to get back to work."

They returned to Moad's office and spent the afternoon going into various aspects of the frame of reference for Isabel's job.

Isabel spent the following day with Elisabeth studying some similar projects that had already been

developed in other African countries. In analysing and discussing these experiences, Isabel had the opportunity to appreciate Elisabeth's training and ability. She sensed that for her work in Ethiopia she would have a good point of reference and support in Elisabeth at the FAO head office in Rome. And the more she became aware of the problems of Ethiopia, the more she felt growing within her the desire to roll up her sleeves and get to work.

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It was the period of the summer rains when Isabel Tagumpay arrived in Addis Ababa. The water did not come down in torrents in that period, but rather there was a daily appointment in the early afternoon with a heavy, but not violent rain, which lasted for a few hours and then left the temperature cool for the evening and the night. The aeroplane landed at nine o'clock in the morning from a sky in which the large rifts of intense blue were beginning slowly to shrink as the clouds pressed in. Isabel was met at the airport by a driver from FAO and taken to the office of the FAO Representative in Ethiopia. There she introduced herself and explained the reason for her trip and her intended stay, which, with frequent journeys in the interior, would be for about six, or perhaps twelve months. From there she went to her

hotel, where she had a shower and changed, and then went straight to the offices of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission which were just behind her hotel.

When Isabel entered Tafessech Ourgay's office, Taffy got up and went to meet her, holding our her hand. The two women looked deeply into one another's eyes and understood each other. In those few moments each read in the look of the other the same sincerity of intentions and the same determination to work hard to achieve them. Tafessech took Isabel round the offices of the Home Economics Section and introduced to her the various people who worked there. Then she looked at her watch and said;

"Miss Tagumpay, this is the time we had reserved for a brief meeting with the Head of the Division of Administration and Training of Rural Settlements, Yebrah Mammo. Our section is a part of this division and Mr. Mammo is my immediate superior."

That meeting was particularly important for Isabel because in the next thirty minutes she was given an acute and exhaustive description of the situation in the rural areas of Ethiopia and of the various programmes under way to improve the living conditions of the people.

"This man," thought Isabel, "not only knows what he is talking about but also feels within him the significance and harshness of the dramatic situations that he is describing."

When they returned to Tafessech's office, the two women sat down facing each other and Taffy began to explain the structure of the section she directed and the work of the Agents in the villages.

For some weeks, Isabel studied and checked the situation of the country in depth from the point of view that concerned her. She read almost all the available reports on the socio-economic situation; she analysed the structures of the governing bodies of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission and the Ministry of Agriculture; she studied the possibility of making use of local bodies such as the Ministry of Education and the Ethiopian Nutrition Institute, and of the international organizations that were active within the country, such as UNICEF and the World Food Programme of the United Nations. She visited most of the rural settlements, old and new, covering the length and breadth of the country in a jeep, analysing local structures, meeting the people who held responsibility in the villages and a large number of Home Economics Agents and talking untiringly with the people. Tafessech helped her with the language when they travelled together, otherwise she had an interpreter assigned to her by the RRC.

This oriental woman with such a delicate appearance walked through the villages carefully observing people and situations. She went into the huts and made friends with the women who stayed to work at home, studied the peasant families in their

daily lives and learned to understand more and more deeply the roles, tasks and responsibilities of each member of the family. She was able to bear tranquilly any discomfort: intense working days that often started after a journey of several hours, begun at dawn; the hot nights spent in minute and rudimentary hotel rooms, with an earthen floor, a bed, a chair, and the windows closed to keep out the insects; the notable lack of toilets (this was very hard for her); the heavy rains which turned the streets and villages into a quagmire.

After several weeks of this work, and after traveling eleven thousand kilometres by day and night on all kinds of roads and tracks and in all weathers, Isabel began to feel that she had become sufficiently well acquainted with life in the villages to begin to plan, at least in outline, the work of the first interventions.

She corresponded more frequently with Elisabeth in Rome and she began to think up a training scheme for the Home Economics Agents. Their number certainly needed to be increased and their training needed to be improved and diversified. She decided that it would be necessary to bring in a new kind of stove that used less fuel and thought of other important ideas that might be suggested for improving daily life in the huts, such as putting in windows, using thin dividing walls to separate and protect the sleeping area, and putting up shelves on the walls for the cooking utensils. She outlined training programmes for the Home Economics Agents which included systems of cultiva-

tion and rotation of horticultural crops; recycling activities for domestic and agricultural waste; the evaluation and selection of nutritive elements in food and the preparation of new dishes; and better management of time for a more effective use of the day. In thinking about the village women who were the target of the programme, Isabel was deeply convinced that centuries of lack of real teaching had not destroyed their potential capacity for learning. This was apparent in the interest with which she had seen them talk about some of her ideas which she had introduced into discussions at times to test their reactions.

The long-distance dialogue with Elisabeth allowed Isabel to verify her own ideas and offered her the support of anything similar that Elisabeth found in the course of her researches into projects carried out in other parts of the world. This constant contact by correspondence had strengthened the mutual esteem of the two women, who were now beginning to feel linked by a growing friendship.

It sometimes happened that Isabel wrote two kinds of letters to Elisabeth: first an official letter to the FAO technical expert for the Ethiopian project, in which she informed her of the progress made and the plans she had in mind to develop. Then she would write another letter, more personal in tone and content, in which she opened her heart to her friend. In it she would speak of the inevitable difficulties and obstacles which sometimes stopped her proceeding at

the rhythm she thought right to adopt, and caused her some moments of discouragement, even though rarely. These situations strengthened their friendship because Elisabeth, after an exhaustive professional reply to the work problems Isabel had described, knew how to find the right words to boost her friend's morale and her motivation to continue her work with determination and to choose the next step.

Isabel's chief aim in this phase was to make the training of the Home Economics Section's personnel broader and deeper. She was concerned in particular with the training of the Agents who would have to work in the villages and in their turn teach the local people. For them Isabel had thought up a course in which they would be taught research methods for ascertaining problems, and techniques for defining, in an effective and at the same time efficient way, work programmes to resolve these problems. In designing this course, Isabel had put the accent on sticking to reality, which always had to be kept well in mind in planning "development" work. In this connection, a passage from the first chapter of the manual she had prepared for the course read as follows:

"Development means the identification of real problems, understanding the situation that causes these problems and, through knowledge and understanding, trying different ways to resolve them.

"The only people who really know everything about the problems of development are the people who have to face them every day, those who live with

them. These people are the farmers, the peasants in the new settlements, the women with whom you work. They can tell you what they have to tackle and can suggest solutions."

And further on, concerning relations between the Agents and the people living in the villages, the manual said:

"The people will discuss their problems only with those whom they trust. They will tell the truth only in these circumstances and if they are sure that the listener can help them. If they do not trust you, they will invent answers and they will not cooperate.

"Before beginning to collect data, you should establish a relationship of trust with the people with whom you are about to work. Remember to introduce yourselves appropriately and to explain why you need a certain kind of information and what you hope to do with it. The interview is a way of working together to find a solution to a problem. You need them and they need you."

This part of the teaching aimed at getting rid of the facile belief that workers in the field of development know more about it than those who are to be helped. Even if this is obviously true in part, it should not be forgotten, and of this Isabel was thoroughly convinced, that solutions to problems have to be seen in the social context in which they are to be received.

After the part concerning involvement and interpersonal relations, the course for the Home Economics Agents examined the various factors

contributing to the situation in the villages. Among these were: the types of settlement; the area and distribution of the territory; the demographic situation; the services which are available and those which are feasible; the production structure; the health situation; the state of nutrition; the social problems (divorce, diseases, beliefs, taboos, superstitions); the characteristics of work; and the non-agricultural activities. And once again to keep in touch with basic reality, in another part of the course manual the fundamental necessities of life were defined thus:

"The primary necessities in the rural settlements are:

Food - the right kind and the right quantity of food.

Shelter - a simple place, but comfortable and healthy, in which to live.

Good health - freedom from sickness, a healthy mind and a healthy body.

Clothing - clothes that are comfortable and warm." (The range of temperature is very wide in Ethiopia).

"It's just the bare minimum for a life worthy of the name," Isabel had thought while writing this section. "But what a long, long way there is to go before reaching that point!"

The course also included a very specific part, "The Planning of a Successful Programme", which Isabel had prepared for the formation of a mentality

and a method of work that were better organized and more efficient. This was a particularly significant phase in the teaching of the Agents and the manual enlarged at length on every aspect, which was then discussed during the course and made the object of exercises.

Forty-one members of the Home Economics Section took part in the training workshop at Awassa. Most of them came from rural settlements scattered all over the country. Everyone's participation in the course was very active and Isabel was completely satisfied with it. That was the way to continue.

Week after week, month after month, Isabel organized meetings and teaching courses on how to manage domestic activities in the villages; and how to make cultivation of vegetable gardens more productive by introducing concepts of crop rotation, nutritional properties of foods and choice and use of appropriate manures. They also dealt with how to organize the sale of part of the harvest or of those crops produced on purpose to raise cash.

Miss Tagumpay, as she was called by everybody in Ethiopia, was untiring and was able to combine that intense activity of teaching, research and liaison work with frequent visits to the villages where she went to see how the improvements and innovations were beginning to be accepted by the people in everyday life. The factor of emulation played an important part in this. The family that first accepted these innovations

and built, for example, a fireplace with two compartments so that two things could be cooked at the same time, or installed dividing panels in their hut (which they could do with readily available local materials like clay and mud), not only benefitted from these improvements but also rose considerably in status in the village and set off a slow but sure chain reaction.

After some months of an intense activity of theoretical and practical training, Isabel Tagumpay, the Philippine expert and FAO consultant, reported to Rome that the seed of an activity of renewal had been planted; now it was up to the Agents to make it germinate in the villages.

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Unlike some of her colleagues in other villages, at Golgòta the Home Economics Agent Aster Beremanu had not been met with mistrust. It sometimes happened that these social assistants were looked on, at the beginning, as government agents or people in close contact with the head of the village, who invaded family privacy. But Aster Beremanu had very soon succeeded in becoming a point of reference and a guide for the village women. This was partly the result of her training and her powers of persuasion, which were remarkable in a woman of not even twenty-five years of age, and partly because of her big,

dark eyes that were alight with confidence and enthusiasm.

After she had finished secondary school in Addis Ababa, Aster had thrown herself into this work with a strong belief in the possibility of contributing to changing the face of her country by substantially improving the role of women in Ethiopian society. After joining the group of Home Economics Agents of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, she had spent a few years in two villages in the northwest as assistant to the Home Economics Agent for that area. During that period she had developed excellent experience of direct contact with the village women, acquiring a profound understanding of their daily problems and the frustration they felt with their role, which was considered secondary in both the family and the community.

Aster knew that all this had to be, and could be, changed. She had welcomed her promotion and the task in the village of Golgòta as her first proper opportunity to work for those objectives. In the last eighteen months her training had improved substantially. She had taken part with great interest and enthusiasm in the national seminar at Awassa and had been fascinated by the natural way in which the FAO consultant, the Philippine Isabel Tagumpay, had dealt in the smallest details with the various possibilities of improving family life in the villages. Aster had profoundly admired Miss Tagumpay, who had not only shown that she deeply understood how life was for the women in

the Ethiopian rural settlements, but had also known how to deal with every question with a naturalness and simplicity that had encouraged all those participating in the course to return quickly to their villages to put into practice what they had learnt.

Backed by her training, experience and enthusiasm, Aster had immediately begun to organize weekly meetings with the women of Golgòta. For many of them, who had children still too small to look after themselves, it has been necessary to organize a rudimentary day nursery, where a few mothers took turns to look after the children, thus allowing the others to take part in the meetings. For some others, the difficulty in participating was caused by the incomprehension of their husbands. This came out, in some cases, in open hostility and violent family rows.

Something of this kind must have happened in the family of Ahmedo Tura, because Aster had not seen Beletech at the last two meetings. She had noticed her the evening before in front of the *tukul* and, as she went up to speak to her, she had noted an ugly black mark around Beletech's left eye. When Aster had approached, Beletech had gone into the hut with some excuse, avoiding the meeting, and Aster had realized that there had been a storm in the family. This male hostility had to be overcome at once. Otherwise Aster realized that her whole home economics programme for the village of Golgòta

might as well be considered finished. In fact, for the village women, overcoming their husbands' hostility and taking part in the meetings all the same was one thing, but to risk being repeatedly beaten for it was another. Aster was glad that this was the day on which Tafessech Ourgay, the Director in Addis Ababa, was to arrive and intended to make this subject the main subject of their meeting.

Aster looked on Tafessech as an older sister: with her she could speak freely and fully of her work experiences and of the difficulties that she came up against. Tafessech knew how to find the solution to every problem and, above all, she made Aster feel the warmth and affection of a profoundly human working relationship that each time renewed her confidence and enthusiasm. She made for the village square just in time to see the arrival of the jeep in which Tafessech travelled to places all over the country. Aster went to meet her, held out her hand and said:

"Welcome, Tafessech, I was expecting you."

"Hello, Aster," answered Tafessech. "How are you?"

"Fine, thanks, I'm fine."

"Everything alright, Aster?"

"Yes, everything alright."

"And how are you, are you well, Aster?"

"Yes, I'm fine."

This repetition of the question was part of a greeting ritual that underlined the fact that the

question was not just a polite greeting but something that was really felt.

"Well, in fact, not everything is really going well," said Aster.

"Why, what's wrong?"

"Too many women are absent from the meetings. In some cases the absences have been repeated and there is only one reason: their husbands."

"Here too, eh?" said Tafessech. "It's a problem we've had to face and overcome in other villages too."

"We've got a difficult case here," said Aster. "A woman by the name of Beletech Tura, the mother of three children, hasn't come to the meetings twice in a row and yesterday evening I saw her going into the house with a black eye. And Beletech could be the best of the pupils and become an example for the women of the village. She's intelligent and willing to learn and she learns quickly."

"Let's go and see her together," said Tafessech.

They set off towards the southern side of the village, where the *tukul* belonging to the Tura family was. It was about ten o'clock in the morning. Her husband would certainly be in the fields and Beletech would probably be back already from the well. In fact, they found her in front of the hut putting some clothes out to dry.

"Hello, Beletech," said Aster, "our Director wants to speak to you for a moment."

Beletech turned round and Tafessech could clearly see the marks of blows on her face. After a few words of greeting, Tafessech said gently:

"Aster has told me that you haven't been going to the meetings lately."

"No, I haven't been able to," said Beletech, lowering her eyes.

"I believe I know why you haven't been able to," said Tafessech.

Beletech gave a start and raised her eyes, which were full of pain and dejection.

"What is your husband's name?" asked Tafessech.

"Ahmedo."

"And it is he who doesn't want you to come to the meetings, am I right?"

Beletech stared at the ground again in silence.

"But do you like coming to the meetings?" asked Aster.

"Yes."

"But Good Heavens!" said Tafessech, turning to the two women. "When will our men understand that we don't want to be as we were before any longer, that we want to change, that we want to learn to work better, not to have a gay time but so that our families can live better! This certainly isn't a unique case. We've had some stubborn husbands! But sooner or later they all end up by understanding and accepting willingly the new situation. And believe me, in the end they realize that then things are better for them

too. Patience is necessary ... patience, but also firmness."

"I am patient," said Beletech, "but I am also afraid. Ahmedo told me that I don't belong to the Women's Association, I belong to him and that I had better remember it!"

Tafessech smiled and said: "And who is going to forget it? Certainly not you, and neither will we ... But don't worry, you'll see that we will settle this question. We'll talk to him, or better still we'll get the village head to talk to him."

Beletech gave a start and said: "No, don't do that, otherwise who will have to put up with him then!"

"I'm telling you, don't worry," said Tafessech, "we have put lots of these situations right. You have to do only one thing: next Saturday morning, remind him that you have to come to the meeting. You'll see that Ahmedo won't say anything to you."

Having calmed Beletech down a little, Tafessech and Aster returned to the village square. There they greeted the medical dispensary nurse and went into the little room belonging to the Women's Association where they spent a couple of hours talking about the programmes that Aster had begun to carry out in the village. When they got onto the subject of horticulture, Tafessech pulled a double disc of printed cardboard out of her bag, showed it to Aster and asked her:

"Do you remember the table of nutritional values of the main garden products that Miss Tagumpay explained to you at the seminar in Awassa?"

"Of course. Let me tell you that I count on that programme a lot to reach the men here through their stomachs!" said Aster, with a burst of laughter.

"Here it is, the table has been turned into this double disc, really useful and easy to use for the Home Economics Agents. Look: on the edge of the larger disc, this one here that's sticking out, there are the names of the main products that can be cultivated: papaya, avocado, guava, beans, potatoes, etc. Here on the smaller disc, that revolves on top of the other, you see these two scales. One shows, corresponding to each of the garden products, the values ... the main nutritional values per hundred grammes. The other describes what has to be done to cultivate them.

Aster was very attentive. "I see that the root depth is also indicated," she said.

"Yes," said Tafessech, "do you remember that the teacher of horticulture spoke to us of the possibility of using the same area of land at different depths, thus exploiting the nutritive values of the land with the rotation of different crops?"

They went on a little longer talking about horticulture and nutrition. Tafessech found a way to remind Aster politely that, in the nutrition programme, teaching the cultivation of crops with a good nutritional value was only half the job. The other half was teaching the women to use, in the best way and with the maximum effect, all the edible part of each crop by cooking it properly.

At lunch time (it had got rather late, it was almost two o'clock in the afternoon) they got up and went towards the simple, one-storey, brick construction where those who were responsible for the village lived. On the way, they met Ababe Worku, the village head, who greeted them cordially. Tafessech said to him:

"Aster and I need to talk to you. We'll come over to you as soon as we've eaten something, early this afternoon."

"Certainly, " replied Ababe, "but why don't you come towards evening instead so that we can go for a walk and have dinner together?"

"I'd be glad to come," said Tafessech, "but, at least for me, unfortunately it's impossible. I have a four-hour drive to get back to Addis Ababa this evening. And anyway, I'm sure that you two have plenty of reasons for going for walks!"

Ababe, evidently embarrassed, mumbled something and said good-bye to them. Going into Aster's little room, Tafessech asked her with a smile:

"We're still at the same stage with Ababe, aren't we?"

"Yes, still at the same stage! I know he likes me, even a blind man could see it, yet he has never brought up the subject with me. When we meet, we talk about work and nothing else. I can hardly make the first move! Though I'd like to ..."

"Be patient, when he's worked himself up, he'll come forward. Of course, things won't be so good for

me, however! If one day you two get married, I'll have to look for another Home Economics Agent for Golgòta."

"On no account!" protested Aster. Then she added: "At least not at once. I want to carry on with my job until I have children. Then we'll see."

"You're right: then we'll see," said Tafessech, mentally noting that this plan was clear evidence of the emancipation of women which was taking place in the country.

Aster's room had whitewashed walls and an earthen floor and was furnished extremely simply. On the left of the entrance there was a cooking stove; at the end, the bed, on which Aster had put, in Tafessech's honour, an embroidered cotton bedspread which had been a present from her mother; on the right, a kind of sofa, consisting of a mattress placed half on the floor and half against the wall.

"Here we are. While you sit down and rest a little, said Aster, "I'll heat up the *scerowat* that I made yesterday evening."

"But you don't want to light the fire now," exclaimed Tafessech. "Let's eat it like this, as it is. You know that it's better the day after, even if it isn't hot."

"As you prefer," said Aster, who didn't really feel like lighting the fire after all. She put the *scerowat* onto two earthenware plates, using up only half the space. Beside it she put two pieces of *injira* cooked in very thin layers and made into a roll. They ate and exchanged the important news about their lives in the

previous weeks. Aster spoke about Golgòta and Tafessech recounted episodes of life in other villages. They ate without knives and forks, using their fingers with that dignity that Ethiopian women are able to confer on such simple and time-honoured gestures.

After they had washed up and put away the kitchen things, Tafessech and Aster went out and made their way to Ababe Worku's office.

"Well, do you want to speak to him?" asked Tafessech.

"No, no," replied Aster, "it would better if you spoke to him. "I'm sure he'll give us a hand, but it would be better if he heard it from you."

Ababe Worku's office was simple and orderly. There was a small desk made of light-coloured wood in the centre of the room, with three identical chairs around it, one on one side and two on the opposite side. On the right-hand wall were shelves of files, registers and card indexes. The two women greeted Ababe, who was sitting at the desk reading the previous day's production report, and sat down in front of him.

"Ababe," began Tafessech, "I know very well that there is no need for me to remind you how important it is for the life and the future of the village that Aster can count on the participation of all the women in carrying out her programme. She is managing very well with the normal causes of absenteeism: as you know, she has even organized a small kindergarten so that the majority of the women can take part without

the problem of not knowing who to leave their small children with. However, we've got a case that needs your assistance. You know the Tura family?"

"Yes, of course. They are good people," replied Ababe. "How could you possibly have a problem with them?"

"Ah, my dear fellow!" said Tafessech, "isn't it perhaps true that men can change completely when they feel that the importance of their role as head of the family has diminished? That is just what's happening to Ahmedo Tura. His wife Beletech is a good wife and mother and could be a fine example to the women of the village. Isn't that so, Aster?"

"Exactly!" said Aster. "She follows attentively and understands all the lessons well. She is better organized than the others and really has a great desire to learn."

"Perhaps it's just that which doesn't go down well with her husband," said Tafessech. "You know the old story, my dear Ababe: The man is accustomed to knowing that the woman is at home at the stove and with the children, or out getting the wood or water. It's always been like that, and the meetings of the Women's Association undermine the old order and make the men insecure. In some cases this insecurity becomes a real fear of seeing their own role as head of the family diminish in importance and then they lash out!"

"Are you telling me that Ahmedo Tura beat his wife to stop her going to Aster's lessons?" asked Ababe.

"Exactly that," continued Tafessech. "The poor woman is frightened and she has a black eye. Just think that her husband told her that she belongs to him and not to the Women's Association!"

All three of them burst out laughing and then Tafessech continued:

"But I'm not surprised, I knew that sooner or later it would happen in Golgòta too. Episodes of this kind have taken place in all the villages in which we have developed our domestic economy programme. The important thing is to stop this kind of behaviour at the very beginning, otherwise the bad example is followed by others too."

"And how have you managed it in the other villages?" asked Ababe.

"With a good telling-off by the head of the village. And when that wasn't enough, by imposing penalties through the work points." Tafessech spoke with great firmness. "Even if this is not the best way to educate people, it is necessary to stop this violent behaviour at the very beginning. The evidence of the facts will then persuade them that the changes their wives want are for the well-being of the whole family."

"So you want me to speak to him?" asked Ababe.

"Yes," replied Tafessech, "and the sooner the better."

"Alright, I'll do it this evening. You're about to leave again, aren't you?"

Tafessech nodded. "I have to be in Addis Ababa this evening."

"Well," continued Ababe, "Aster and I will inform you how things go." Then, turning to Aster, he said: "I'll call in on you after supper to tell you how it went with Ahmedo."

"Alright, I'll be expecting you," said Aster.

"Give my regards to Yebrah Mammo when you see him," said Ababe to Tafessech.

"I'll do that," she replied. "And thanks for your help with the Tura family. I'm sure that it will put things right. It is time for us to go. See you in three weeks' time."

"Good-bye, Tafessech. See you later, Aster."

"Yes, 'bye."

The two women went out and Ababe remained thoughtful for a while. He did not like the idea of interfering so deeply in the private life of a family in the village, but he realized that it had to be done. He had been present as an observer at the seminar in Awassa and he was fully convinced of the validity of the Women's Association programme. It aimed at changing significantly the role of the woman in the family for the first time in the history of his country. Ababe knew the Ethiopian economic situation well enough to realize that the main way to improve the difficult living conditions was to make agriculture more productive by balancing the damage caused by drought and the advancement of the desert in the north with better exploitation of the land in the centre

and south. And he knew equally well that in this context the women represented a valuable potential. Left to themselves for centuries, always considered second-class citizens, it was now necessary to rouse them from that situation and quickly teach them how to contribute better to the life of the community. Ababe knew that all this was not easy. He smiled to himself at the thought that in the very advanced western countries this change in the role of women had taken several centuries, while in his country they aimed to make it in a generation or two.

"And we mustn't stop," he murmured, going to a shelf to get a register of the families in the village. After he had read what he needed, he took down the card index devoted to work activities and pulled out a card. He read it, turned it over a few times and then went to the door, which had remained open, and said to a boy outside:

"Go to the cotton plantation and look for Ahmedo Tura. Tell him to come and see me today, at the end of the shift, because I want to speak to him." He left the door open, went back into his office and sat down at the desk, picking up the papers that he had been reading before his meeting with Tafessech and Aster.

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At the village of Golgòta that year, after several months of very good weather, the April rains had been very heavy. Unlike those of July-August, the April rains were real downpours that fell on the village and paralyzed activities in the fields. After his talk with the head of the village, Ahmedo Tura (who did not want to admit even to himself that he had in fact had a real telling-off) had not opposed his wife's participation in Aster's meetings. He had assumed a passive and detached attitude with regard to this new aspect of Beletech's life.

However, that meeting with Ababe Worku, the head of the village, had shaken Ahmedo. At the age of thirty-five, with a wife and children, he had started a new life on new land and he could not bear the idea of being considered behind the times. Indeed, just to show everyone that he was not, Ahmedo had taken part in one of the most important of the Women's Association meetings. It was the one at which Aster had demonstrated and explained the working of the mould for the new double fireplace which had just arrived from the capital.

That meeting had caught Ahmedo's interest much more than he expected. Though, all things considered, the other meeting he had attended afterwards, the one at which Aster had shown them how to divide a hut with walls made of packed, dried mud had interested him almost as much. And so, during those weeks when work in the fields was much reduced because of the heavy rain, Ahmedo, impelled by a

combination of motives that he was not able to understand completely, had built a clay fireplace using the mould made available to him by Aster. He had also put up half walls to divide the day area from the night area in the *tukul*.

The whole Tura family had helped enthusiastically in this work. Bekele and Tolosa had mixed the mud with dry twigs, which made it thicker. Beletech, with Yeshe's help, had thoroughly cleaned the corner in which Ahmedo had decided to put the new fireplace and had collected a good supply of wood to burn. Then, all together, they had collected clay and brought it to the hut. After that, Beletech and the children had watched for a long time in silence while Ahmedo mixed the clay and put it into the mould.

A few days later, when the new fireplace and the walls were ready, Beletech felt a great joy. She was happy at the thought of the time that would be saved in cooking, and flattered by the interest of the other women of the village, who kept visiting her to see the novelties.

One evening, just after sunset, Ahmedo was sitting near the fireplace finishing his supper when he heard someone calling him. He went outside and saw the head of the village and Aster, who were smiling at him.

"Hello, Ahmedo," said Ababe Worku, "Aster has told me about the wonderful new things in your house. Can we come in and see them?"

"Yes, of course," said Ahmedo.

Beletech had just finished giving the children their food. They were sitting on the ground in the same corner where, a little while before, their father had had his supper. She turned to them with a smile and said:

"Welcome to our house! Would you like something to eat?"

"No, no thanks, we've already had supper," replied Aster.

"There," said Ahmedo, going up to the fireplace. "This is the new stove. I built it with Aster's mould."

"You were quite right, Aster," added Beletech, "I can really organize myself better for lunch and supper."

"And these are the dividing walls," continued Ahmedo. "Now we can sleep with more privacy and tranquillity."

"This is really an excellent job," said Ababe Worku. "Well done indeed, or rather, I should say well done all of you!" The hut echoed with the sound of the village head's praise. He went on:

"Now, Ahmedo, I'd like to entrust you with a task ..."

"What is it?" asked Ahmedo.

"Well, you see," replied Ababe, "you are the first in the village to have constructed these things, so now you have more experience than anyone else. I'd like you to participate in Aster's next meeting and explain how you made the new fireplace and the internal

walls, how you mixed the materials, how you used the mould, how long the baking of the clay took ... "

"I'll do it with pleasure," exclaimed Ahmedo, "and then if anyone wants to see how the job turned out, I'll bring him here to my house so that he can see with his own eyes."

"Excellent!" said Aster. "I shall expect you and Beletech together at the next meeting." She said goodbye to them and left the hut, followed by Ababe.

It had not only been that episode that had made Ahmedo feel that his family life was in some way changing. In fact, he had noticed that for some time recently Beletech had found a way to cook different things. This she did partly with the ingredients she had used in the past and partly with the new products of the garden, in which she had begun to work every afternoon. For Ahmedo, this situation was still a cause for unease. When he was at work in the fields, he did not know exactly what Beletech was doing at various times of the day and this made him not a little on edge. Then there were those blessed meetings organized by the Home Economics Agent which, in spite of everything, continued to annoy him a little. In short, Ahmedo saw Beletech changing and he had not yet understood what kind of a woman she was becoming.

For her part, Beletech was happy and also a little bewildered by the change that she felt taking place within her. The most wonderful thing that had happened to her in those recent months was to take part in Aster's meetings and to discover the joy of learning

(yes, of learning!), and she had reached the point of starting to count, at the end of every lesson, the days until the next one. She learnt with ease and knew how to make good use of what she had learnt. Some important changes were making her day much more meaningful. With the new fireplace she was able to use less wood and she prepared the dishes for lunch and supper at the same time. The result, in terms of time and effort used, was simply fantastic! Now she went to collect wood only once a day and in the morning she did the cooking for the evening as well. In this way she managed to have a few hours free in the afternoon, which she had already for some time started to devote to cultivating the vegetable garden. Here too, the first gains from what she was learning had not been slow to appear. Beletech had begun to prepare more tasty and nutritious food and she was able to see the effect of this clearly in the satisfied look of her husband when he was eating and in the complexions of the children. With the vegetable garden, she also cherished a marvellous plan: to succeed in producing something extra to sell at the market so as to get some cash to spend on things that she couldn't obtain by barter.

Beletech worked diligently in the garden every afternoon for three months. During that time she tried to narrow the gap between her and Ahmedo, who she felt had been distant with her since the time he had been told off by the head of the village. This detachment made Beletech suffer. She regretted the fact that

she could not share the marvellous period of change, not only of an external and practical kind, that she was living through. She had prayed, oh yes! she had prayed that their former love would return, no longer impetuous like an April torrent, but intense and full like a clear, windless summer.

At last, on Wednesday afternoon of the third week of July, Beletech went to the market with some produce from her garden and returned with some coins held so tightly in her hand that they left a mark. That evening Ahmedo came home in a good mood because he had done a good day's work in the fields with his son Bekele.

"What a long time it seems since the days when we had nothing to eat!" said Ahmedo, sitting down in his usual corner and getting a plate of supper from his wife.

"Yes, Ahmedo," said Beletech smiling, "It's a long time, a very long time, thank God."

Ahmedo looked into his wife's eyes and again, as on many other occasions in recent months, was moved by the new light he saw in them, which was deeper and at the same time more open. Ahmedo did not understand what was behind that new look of his wife's, but he felt that he was growing used to it, indeed he almost expected and liked it.

"You are happy with this new stove, aren't you?" he said to her as he ate his supper.

"You don't know how happy!" exclaimed Beletech.

"There's another thing I want to do," continued Ahmedo. I'm tired of eating sitting on the ground. I want to make a table and a bench, in fact two benches so that we can also give our visitors a seat. We've had a lot of visits lately, haven't we?"

"Almost too many, said Beletech. I'm glad that it isn't a novelty any more. I prefer it when our family is all together in the evening.

The next morning Beletech went to see Aster, who had to go to the regional capital for a meeting with the regional coordinator, and gave her the money she had earned the day before. In the evening, when the children saw Beletech coming back from Aster's house with a package in her hands, they tried to find out what it was, but Beletech managed to avoid their curiosity. After a while, she had the package near the hut without being seen.

That evening the Tura family went to bed a little earlier than usual. Ahmedo wanted Beletech close to him and he took her in his arms. As she embraced him, Beletech felt that something was changing in Ahmedo. It was not a hasty embrace, as had often happened in recent months, and this time Beletech felt in Ahmedo's tight hold the desire to find again those happy moments they had once had.

The next morning, Ahmedo found Beletech's package beside his breakfast corner.

"What's this?" he asked her.

Without looking at him, she replied: "It's something for you, but you can only open it after breakfast when you are about to leave."

"Something for me?" asked Ahmedo. He was surprised, very surprised, almost incredulous. It was a long, long time since they had given one another presents; they couldn't afford it. He asked: "But what's the date today? Is it a particular day?"

Beletech smiled. "No, no, it's just something for you, that's all," she said and gave him his breakfast.

While drinking his coffee, Ahmedo kept glancing at the package, which seemed strangely light. He finished his breakfast more quickly than usual, picked up the package and got up, saying:

"Can I open it now?"

"Alright, open it," said Beletech.

Ahmedo tore open the package. He couldn't believe his eyes: it was a straw hat with a wide brim to keep off the sun.

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For the whole morning Ahmedo worked in the fields without saying a word to his son and thought constantly of Beletech. Bending over the land, his hands moved automatically and his thoughts were all the time on his wife. After remembering their life as it had unfolded in the fifteen years of their marriage, a

thought crossed his mind and made him straighten up, with his chin leaning on the hand which held the hoe: how did he, Ahmedo Tura, want to live in future with his family?

That afternoon Ahmedo left Bekele to finish the day's work and returned home while the sun was still high in the sky. He got the cooperative to give him the wheelbarrow and the saw and went to the woods. He looked carefully at various trees, chose one and cut it down. He sawed the trunk into six pieces and carried them home. One piece, the widest, was about half a metre high, while the other five pieces were smaller. He piled up on one side the five small pieces of the trunk and set to work on the larger one. He had also brought a bundle of branches from the woods. He sawed them all to the same length and spread them out like the spokes of a wheel on the larger piece of wood, binding them firmly together and to the trunk. Then he wove a kind of straw matting in among the branches. It was already almost evening when Beletech, returning from her work in the garden, found Ahmedo crouching beside something which had the form of a table and her three children watching him with curiosity from a distance.

"Supper is ready," said Beletech, "it just needs to be heated. But what's this?"

"Do you remember I told you I was tired of eating on the ground?" said Ahmedo.

"Yes, I remember."

"There, from now on I shall eat at a table." He picked up the table and put it down in the usual corner. Then he went out, fetched the five pieces of trunk and arranged them round the table. When Beletech said that she was ready with the supper, Ahmedo sat down on one of the logs. Beletech watched him with a smile, while the three children waited their turn at a certain distance, interested, curious and hungry.

"Another thing that I've been thinking," said Ahmedo, while Beletech was serving him his supper, "is that, now we have food and the space we need, I don't want to eat alone any more. Come and sit down with me."

Beletech straightened her shoulders and turned her head, biting her lip to hide her emotion. Of the three children, the first to accept the invitation was Bekele. He went over with a slow but steady step, sat down and smiled at his father.

"Yeshi, Tolosa, aren't you hungry?" asked Ahmedo, half seriously, half jokingly. In this way the uncertainty of Yeshi and Tolosa was overcome and they too took their places at the table.

"This place is for you, Beletech," said Ahmedo, pointing to the stump on which no-one was sitting. He concluded: "And now, let's eat, otherwise it will get cold."

Beletech took the big pot of *injira* and *scerowat* from the hearth, put it in the middle of the table and

sat down, but she could not hold back two marvellous, burning tears of joy.

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At Golgòta, on Saturday some months later there was a holiday. Isabel Tagumpay and Tafessech Ourgay had come to inaugurate the new day nursery which the inhabitants of Golgòta had built in the centre of the village. It would allow many young mothers from that time on to leave their children in a place protected from the rain for a few hours a day, in the care of young people of their own village, trained for the job.

In the late afternoon, having said good-bye to Aster and the head of the village who had seen them to the jeep, Isabel and Tafessech looked at one another with satisfaction, while the driver drove slowly along the path of beaten earth which led out of the village.

"What a wonderful day it's been!" exclaimed Isabel, leaning against the back of the seat and stretching out her legs.

"Yes, really wonderful," said Tafessech, "and Aster is a really valuable collaborator, don't you think?"

"Yes, indeed," said Isabel. "But when will you start thinking of someone to replace her?"

Tafessech burst out laughing. "So you also noticed how Aster and Ababe Worku were looking at one another! You're right, I really think that I shall have to return before very long to bring down a substitute."

"Speaking of substitutions, Mrs. Ourgay, next week is the last week that we'll be working together. My job here is finished."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Tafessech, "we've already reached the end of July... and a year has already passed! Miss Tagumpay, this is a year that I shall not forget."

"Neither shall I," said Isabel, leaning her head on the back of the seat, with her eyes closed and a faint smile on her lips.

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A year later, remembering her experience in Ethiopia, Isabel Tagumpay wrote:

"At the end of my stay, another one-year Technical Cooperation Project was drawn up and approved. It was to use the funds left over from the old budget, but without a FAO consultant. Mrs. Tafessech took over my role in this activity. I was confident that she and her collaborators could carry out the project with the support of FAO from Rome.

"Another project, a three-year one, was prepared and presented for possible assistance from donor countries: a project to extend the experience and to offer opportunities of training at a higher level to the staff of the Home Economics Section."

"To help further in bringing our work to completion, a proposal for the opening of a Department of Domestic Economy at the Agricultural University of Awassa was proposed.

"As a result of the Awassa National Seminar, various proposals and projects dealing with Women and Development were prepared and presented for execution or for examination to the Government and to interested organizations."

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As was said in the preface, the FAO project that is spoken of in this story really did take place. It was FAO/TCP/ETH/0107, which took twelve months (1983-84) to carry out and cost 257 000 dollars.

Among the characters, although the FAO people are presented with different names, four are real: Elisabeth Allen, after leaving FAO in Rome to live in still closer contact with the developing countries, worked for several years in Nigeria with the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture and then returned to Rome to another United Nations

Agency; Isabel Tagumpay, after Ethiopia, worked in another job with FAO in The Sudan; Tafessech Ourgay, who herself became a mother, continued her work as Head of the Home Economics Section in Addis Ababa and I think she is still there; and Miguel Herrera worked for FAO in Peru. We shall get to know him better in the next story.

The other characters, although imaginary, are representative of the Ethiopian reality which I came to know personally.



## ON THE MOUNTAINS OF PERU

*I dedicate this story to the boy in Cuzco who when night falls takes shelter with his little brother in a news-stand and who made me realize in a flash how one can be grown up even at the age of seven.*



That morning at the end of April, when autumn was coming to Lima, Miguel Herrera arrived early, as he usually did, at CESPAC, the *Centro de Servicios de Pedagogía Audio-visual para la Capacitación*. His office was small and very simply furnished: a few bookshelves, a table and some chairs. Behind the desk was a large map of Peru.

Miguel Herrera, FAO's international director of the innovative project for audio-visual training to foster rural development in Peru, threw open the French windows and stepped out into the terrace that overlooked the CESPAC entrance. He took a deep breath of morning air (as far as a heavy smoker's lungs can) and then went back into his office and sat down at the desk. Before him he had two documents that he had gone over thoroughly the previous evening. One was on the development of training projects in the agricultural villages in the mountains

of Cuzco; the other described the conclusion of the new annual training course for audio-visual trainers.

"The time for drawing conclusions has arrived", he thought. He remembered the words used in the original document some years ago to describe the two main general objectives of this national project: "the development and large-scale application of an audio-visual training method appropriate to the social and economic conditions of rural Peru, and the training of national technicians for work in the various field projects".

Although Miguel knew that both objectives had been achieved, by temperament he was never satisfied with what had been done in accordance with his ideas and under his guidance. He had always been sustained by a deep affection for the *campesinos*, and his awareness of the harsh living conditions in many Peruvian regions spurred him on constantly to work for the improvement of their lives.

Miguel was well aware of the origin of his love for the land and the *campesinos*. In only two generations, his family had accomplished the development he was helping to bring about in those regions, although he knew it would take a long time. In Miguel Herrera's case, the quality leap had come about two generations earlier, in his birthplace, Galizia, in Spain, when his grandfather, the son of a carpenter, and his grandmother, a mattress maker, had made great sacrifices in order to send their five children to university, in an age when studying was

very expensive. Miguel's father took a degree in medicine and went to work in a leper colony in the Canary Islands. As his mother wanted her children to be born in her native land, his parents went back to Galizia and Miguel and his brother were born there.

When the Civil War broke out, his parents, who were Republicans, were tried by Franco's regime during the occupation of Galizia: his father was shot in 1937, when Miguel was four and his brother six, and his mother was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment. While she was in prison, Miguel and his brother lived with their mother's brother. He sent them to secondary school, where they learned to speak Castilian. In 1947, when his mother came out of prison, she did everything she could to earn a living in Galizia, but in the end she and her two children had to emigrate to Argentina.

"How strange!", thought Miguel, smiling to himself and opening the document on the Cuzco project. "When I recall the past, it seems full of joy and satisfaction. They were hard times, and we went hungry. We didn't just have an appetite, we were really hungry. And yet I look back on that time with happiness. We were very close, my mother, my brother and I."

The three of them went to live with one of their mother's sisters and her little girl. Those were years of struggle for survival, as they were for all the emigrants. At first Miguel worked in a baker's shop, then in a shirt factory, and later, when he was fifteen,

in a foundry. After that he did all sorts of odd jobs to eke out a living. And in those days it was not easy for a family of *gagliegos* to get by in Buenos Aires. The Argentinians were not well disposed towards the emigrants, and expressed their contempt for them in sayings like "the *gagliego* is the nearest known animal to man".

In spite of the privations and the difficulty of supporting the family, their mother wanted Miguel and his brother to continue their studies. "What a woman, what a mother!", thought Miguel, looking up from his desk and into the distance. "She was imprisoned when I was four and came back when I was twelve. In those years I saw her only twice, but when she came back she immediately became a mother, friend and adviser to my brother and me. We tackled problems together and worked together. She was an open-minded, frank person, who talked to us clearly about everything without bashfulness. In an age when sex was taboo, she managed to speak clearly about it when we were the right age. And even now that she's nearly eighty, she seems to have the lively intellect of a twenty-year-old."

Miguel had got to know the *campesinos* when he was working in the head office of the mines in Buenos Aires. He often went into the fields to meet the local people; for him it was more like finding the *campesinos* again than making their acquaintance. They had the same features, the same characteristics, the same mentality and the same problems as the

rural people of his native Galizia. It had been easy for him to identify with the *campesinos*, and he found it natural to feel first respect for them and then that deep solidarity that gradually turned to brotherly love.

During this period he registered at the the university faculty of geology; but having to work hard to earn a living slowed down his studies. He was more interested in people and their problems. He joined a student association and was elected the students' representative on the Faculty Council. He remembered with pleasure the period spent as an instructor on the geology foundation course. He found the work stimulating; it brought him into direct contact with students younger than himself and they felt he was someone they could turn to and who would support them. Nothing in life happens by chance, and thanks to this experience Miguel was chosen by the Head of Faculty to be a member of a committee established to prepare closed circuit TV teaching courses. Six representatives, one from each faculty, sat on this committee, and Miguel was the one who showed the greatest interest in the project. At that time (he was about twenty-four or twenty-five) he used to work twelve to fourteen hours a day. He himself was the first to be surprised at his enthusiasm: he had always despised television, which in South America had been established and maintained by purely commercial concerns. The project, however, was quite another matter: the medium was used for didactic purposes and his interest in this was so great

that it brought out all his leadership qualities. The result was that after less than a year he was appointed head of the TV education department.

He decided to give up his geological studies and devote himself to the development of this new technique, as he thought that in audio-visual teaching he could be useful to other people. Some years later, in 1966, when General Onganía staged a coup d'état in Argentina and the Argentinian universities were occupied by the army, he was in England, having been invited by the British Council, who wanted to know what was being done in Argentina in the field of educational TV. It was there that the Ford Foundation, which supported the project, offered him three options for the continuation of his work: in Chile, Mexico or Venezuela. After a brief reconnaissance in the three countries, Miguel chose Chile. He was sent there by the Ford Foundation and started to form a group to serve the Ministry of Education.

For various reasons the project was not a success, and after two years the working group was disbanded. Still in Chile, in 1968, Miguel was approached by members of Frei's new Christian Democrat Government, who asked him to take part in the establishment of Chile's national TV network. He remembered with pleasure that period of work in contact with enthusiastic young people borne up by pure ideals for the progress of their country. In those five years of hard work, Miguel managed to

concentrate on the objective of training, which found practical expression in a course to prepare the first TV programme directors.

At the end of the five years, in 1973, Miguel had his first contact with FAO. It was arranged by a professor at the University of Cornell in the USA, who was the manager of an FAO rural development project, and had invited him to spend a few days' holiday with him in southern Chile. They had travelled about the countryside together, pitching their tent here and there, visiting villages and rural communities, and having long conversations with the *campesinos*. At the end of the holiday, the American professor proposed to FAO that Miguel should head an educational project appropriate to conditions in Chile and in keeping with what the country required: an improvement in the working capabilities of rural communities, to sustain the development programmes that Allende's new Socialist government was preparing.

His previous experience with the new Government had not been fortunate for Miguel, who had found it difficult to train managers for the national TV network. In this new project, however, he felt he had the Government's support in preparing and carrying out the task of using TV to educate rural communities. So he started training the staff, setting up the first mobile units, and going into rural communities to produce the first TV training programmes on agriculture and animal husbandry.

Right in the middle of this preparatory work, the project was brusquely interrupted by Pinochet's coup d'état. Miguel remembered the experience well. The political situation looked very bad, so Miguel, now a married man and the father of two children, decided to leave Chile and go to his mother's house in Argentina. It was his mother, who remembered her dreadful experiences in the Spanish Civil War, who had urged him to flee to Argentina. Two days after he left Chile, Miguel received a hasty and untimely telegram from FAO which, noting his voluntary departure from Chile, cancelled his temporary contract as of the previous day! Two days later, however, he received another telegram, this time from the directors of the Communication and Development Support Section, who said they were worried about him, asked him what he intended to do and to keep in touch, and wished him good luck. Four days later, yet another telegram arrived, inviting him to go to Rome for a brief consultation. So go he did, and was offered the chance to work in Rome to get over that period.

Miguel's memories of that period at FAO's Headquarters in Rome were wonderful, from both the professional and the personal point of view. The members of the Communication and Development Support Section were fine, enthusiastic people. They all worked together very hard (often leaving the office very late), and found their professional cooperation reciprocally stimulating. From the social point of view, the group proved most friendly and hospitable.

Unlike other FAO colleagues who had had to leave Chile hastily, Miguel was greeted with great warmth and solidarity.

At the end of these three months, Miguel was offered three possibilities: to go to Brazil or Peru, or to continue working in Rome. As Peru is basically an agricultural country, Miguel thought that he would have better possibilities there of carrying out the rural development communications project he had begun in Chile.

At the beginning, the work in Peru was not very satisfying. The project, which covered various aspects of rural development, was implemented by a group of eight experts, including Miguel, and unfortunately some of them showed little devotion to the cause of small farmer progress. To be quite frank, a few of them proved more interested in their own welfare than in that of the rural populations they were working for.

Miguel's lips tightened as he remembered the heated, almost violent argument he had had with one of these experts, who had come to live in the same village, a healthy place about thirty kilometres from CESPAC, where Miguel had been living for some time. To Miguel it seemed quite normal for his wife to have the car every day, so that she could take the children to school and collect them, and for him to go to the office by public transport. But the first thing his colleague did when he arrived was to ask the project manager for a chauffeur-driven car to pick him up every day at seven and to provide additional justi-

fication for his request, he said that the driver could take Miguel to work as well. Miguel had been using public transport for eight months; his reaction was quite cutting and left no room for doubt about what he thought of that type of privilege.

Because of this colleague's behaviour and certain difficulties that arose in the discussions with his Peruvian government counterpart, the project proceeded slowly and in a confused manner for a while, until a new counterpart was appointed by the Government. He analysed the situation and informed FAO that the only part of the project that still interested the Peruvian Government was the audio-visual communication component, which for Peru was a really original contribution. In fact, Peru had people well versed in agricultural economics and technology, animal husbandry and market research, but no audio-visual communication experts. So what had been a general rural development project became an development communication project, and Miguel was asked to run it.

Looking at the facts in perspective and as a whole, one might say that events spanning two generations had helped to produce what could rightly be considered as an expression of the new concept of solidarity that was appearing in different forms in many parts of the world.

In 1976, the first full year of this TV communication project to support regional development in

Peru, Miguel and his colleagues immediately came up against a big financial obstacle. He remembered with pleasure how this obstacle had been suddenly overcome, thanks to an unexpected 90,000-dollar contribution by the Dutch Government. The early years of the project were devoted to the theoretical and practical experience needed to put together the first programmes for training *pedagogos audiovisuales*. Above all, after the rather unsuccessful first course, which started with 27 students at the end of 1975 and lasted for seven months, a much more practical method was adopted and the theoretical topics were related more closely to the rural training methodology, which was the nature and specific purpose of the work of the *pedagogos audiovisuales*.

These new professionals were versed in many skills: they could carry out socio-economic research in the field, identify the prime needs of a particular agricultural community, and conceive and produce TV films capable of presenting new methods and solutions to day-to-day production problems to the *campesinos* in simple language. The preparation of *pedagogos audiovisuales* continued with training in the use of technical means of filming and projecting programmes for closed circuit television, and the techniques employed in presenting and illustrating films to the rural communities. In fact, in the first year slides were also used, but it was immediately apparent that TV films were much more effective in capturing the attention of the *campesinos* and explaining the

new methodology necessary for rural communities. *Pedagogia audiovisual* included all this, and was neatly summed up by the popular saying, "What I don't like, I forget; what I see, I remember. What I do, I know".

Miguel lit a cigarette with the one he was about to stub out in the ashtray, and his mind went back to that marvellous initial period, when the support and devotion of his first colleagues and the intelligence and generosity of his new Peruvian counterpart proved decisive. At the beginning, when there were great financial difficulties in making the first TV courses, his counterpart had lent the organization money out of his own pocket to help get over the critical period.

In his mind Miguel went over the first four courses produced: "Grain parasites", which was presented to the Cuzco community; "Women's health during pregnancy and childbirth", presented to the Lambaieghe community; "Lemon growing" for the community of Piura; and "Elements of accounting", for the small new urban-rural communities of Lima. From then on the work had increased, with the production of new courses, the training of new *pedagogos audiovisuales* and the running of training periods in the country's rural communities. Miguel well remembered the first four hard years in which he had worked from Monday to Saturday, from early morning until ten or eleven o'clock at night. Only six of the 27 students in the first course were still at

CESPAC. There had been a kind of natural selection: those who had come out of curiosity, without great determination or a spirit of sacrifice, or who did not believe that it was possible to improve the lives of the impoverished *campesinos*, and those who preferred to complain instead of gritting their teeth and overcoming difficulties with drive and creativity, had had to give up.

And so, of all CESPAC's staff, only six people had been with Miguel Herrera from the very start. Miguel smiled when he remembered how he had recruited Jorge Hemedía, a teacher in a little rural cooperative, and Clara de Souza, a young sociology graduate, who ten years earlier had been undecided whether to become an actress or take up sociology and join CESPAC. Experience confirmed Miguel's expectations of Jorge Hemedía, who soon proved to be very sensitive towards the problems of the *campesinos* and capable of relating to the rural communities. Miguel's doubts about Clara de Souza were dispelled by events, because she turned out to be an intelligent, sensitive *pedagoga audiovisual* with great ability and adaptability; these qualities enabled her to deal with difficult situations with speed and determination, in spite of her youth. How many tough assignments she had satisfactorily accomplished! And now, thanks to her experience, Clara had been sent to Cuzco for four months to direct the work of a group of instructors in some agricultural communities in the mountains.

A slight smile lit up Miguel's face as he stubbed out his cigarette; his satisfaction was due to the fact that about fifty per cent of his staff were women. In a country, or rather a continent, dominated by men, this was a step in the right direction.

Miguel was not an easy man to work for. He was well known for his demanding character, which stemmed from his profound knowledge of the living conditions of the *campesinos*, and the tension that drove him on in his efforts to improve them. Miguel devoted himself utterly to his work and to his colleagues, but he expected that they would do the same. He sometimes got furious if someone made a mistake, but he could also forget and above all he bore no ill will. He liked to say to himself and others that he didn't have an ulcer and he didn't want to get one. If he had something to say, he came right out with it. In spite of the moments, which to tell the truth were quite frequent, when he lost his cool, the purity of his motives and great professional ability had enabled him to establish a very close relationship with his colleagues, and he constantly strengthened this bond with his spontaneously democratic behaviour and methods. For example, when he went into the field with a team of *pedagogos audiovisuales* they had a common kitty. In those trips, he pooled his FAO allowance of 85 dollars a day and the 5 dollars a day paid by the Peruvian Government to the CESPAC officials. So the whole group lived in the same conditions, in the same hotel and at the same level.

Miguel's aim in those years was to create an organism composed of Peruvians who could make good use of his experience in the field of TV communications until the time came - soon, he hoped - when they no longer needed him. Both as a person, and as the FAO expert responsible for that project, he attached great importance to this objective, and that is why he paid the maximum attention to the training of CESPAC staff. Apart from their professional abilities, what Miguel looked for in his colleagues was the spirit of sacrifice that had characterized his life and made him put the interests of the *campesinos* before his own personal ones. Without this abnegation, which sprang from a deep love of humanity, this project could certainly not have achieved the remarkable results it did.

Without even lighting another cigarette, Miguel opened one of the documents he had in front of him, the one on the development of the training projects in the agricultural mountain villages of the Cuzco area, and started carefully reading the salient parts. This project, called PRODERM (*Proyecto de desarrollo rural in microregion*) was supported by the *Corporación de Desarrollo de Cuzco* and financed by the Government of the Netherlands. In this context CESPAC had been asked to run training courses in the rural communities. After a research and appraisal phase in the area, CESPAC had begun to run two courses: one on the fight against alpaca parasites, and the other on basic health and hygiene. This project not only

responded to the specific needs of the *campesinos* in the area of Cuzco (an ancient town at an altitude of more than 4,000 metres, which had seen the flourishing of the Inca civilization and then been dominated by the Spanish), but was an excellent example of the effectiveness of the general project and the structure of CESPAC, which was set up under the guidance of FAO. Starting from the idea of TV education, the project included the training of Peruvian *pedagogos audiovisuales* in the design and implementation of filmed didactic material, and the subsequent phase of teaching in the various rural communities of the whole country. The great number of these communities and the size of the areas covered had required the training of a third level of operators, the *capacitadores*, instructors trained to present the courses under the guidance and supervision of the *pedagogos audiovisuales*.

At that time the CESPAC Regional Unit in Cuzco was composed of 28 people. This group performed various activities: the training of instructors; the research into and appraisal of situations; the production of TV courses; and teaching for the *campesinos*, both directly and in the framework of projects of other public or private institutions.

Miguel smiled as his mind turned to the young woman who for the past four months had been running the CESPAC project in the ambit of the PRODERM project: Clara de Souza, one of his first pupils, who, as we said earlier, had chosen sociology

instead of acting and joined CESPAC. During his conversations with Clara and his visits to the area, Miguel became convinced of the excellent preparation of CESPAC's project in the context of the PRODERM project, which involved no less than thirty-six rural communities. It was time to go to Cuzco for a field check, and Miguel left a note on the file asking his secretary to book the flights necessary for a three-day trip the following week.

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In San Juan, a village in one of the nine districts of the province of Paruro, south of Cuzco, people had been struggling for thousands of years to eke out an existence. This silent, ceaseless struggle was waged by all family members who were able to work in the fields. The Peruvian Government's efforts to foster a neighbourly spirit in the community had begun to bear fruit in this area. The *campesinos* were taking an increasing interest in their cooperative and cultivating communal land, as well as their individual plots. The produce was marketed and the proceeds benefited communal facilities: elementary schools, drinking water, and public buildings. All this led to a new awareness: the *campesino* perceived that the future was taking on a new perspective, and strove to bring about change.

Life was still very difficult for everyone. Antenor Atahualpa's family was no exception: the fact that he and his wife had many young children made their situation even worse. In the last few years, the meagre returns from the sale of wool had dwindled, because the alpaca sheep were affected by parasites and the traditional remedies had proved ineffective. So Antenor had had to send his two youngest children, seven-year-old Anto and four-year-old Jolián, to stay in Cuzco with his wife's sister, who gave them board and lodging in return for a little help in her business as a newsagent.

This was not an easy decision for Antenor to take. Although it was inevitable, he put it off for many months. But a bad attack of 'flu kept him at home for a few days that were critical for potato and *tarwi* growing, and the last year's harvest was so poor that in the end he could delay no longer: the little ones went to stay with their aunt in Cuzco until the situation got a bit better. Now, a few months after their departure, Antenor felt that things might change. He signed up for the course the *capacitador* had started the previous week, and hoped that by learning the new pest control techniques he would be able to increase his production of wool to sell at the market and have sufficient means to reunite his family the following winter.

Two things struck Antenor in the first few days of the course: the method and the language. He had thought he was too old to learn, but seeing the tech-

niques he needed on the screen was certainly an easy way to learn; and hearing them explained in Quechua on the sound track and by the instructor increased his conviction that something good would come out of his attendance at the course.

To give himself time to attend the evening classes, Antenor went to the fields early. Usually when he left home, at five o'clock, it was starting to get light, but now he left the house at four, when it was still dark. He walked slowly uphill for five kilometres, followed by his two eldest children. He was not surprised that the two boys walked slowly, without talking: he knew very well that at 4,000 metres the five-kilometre climb was a serious matter, even for a twelve- and thirteen-year-old. At that time of year the work was mainly concentrated on reinforcing the rainwater channels. Antenor and his sons walked about the terrace-cultivated land, repeating the gestures and movements which since the time of the Incas had enabled the local people to get good results from their farming, in spite of the great altitude.

But something new stirred in Antenor's heart today. The drive for renewal he received from taking part in the training course was colouring all the other moments of his day. It was as if he had arrived at a cross-roads and taken an unknown path; travelling along it gave him the excitement of the unexpected and the hope of improvement. He spent hours working on the land with his hands, while his mind went over the videos he had seen at the evening classes and

the subsequent discussions between the students and the instructor. He was amazed to see that the village was shaking itself out of the daily repetition of gestures and practices which the lack of hope had made terribly the same in the course of time. It was fine to meet up with his friends at the end of the day under the village tent and to breathe an air fraught with new possibilities. And so, while his hands cleared the labyrinth of canals and little channels which the water was soon to flow through, his mind turned to the next evening class.

When the sun was high overhead, Antenor and his two sons sat in the shade of a bush and had *tarwi* and boiled potatoes for lunch. That was the time the boys looked forward to, when they could bombard their father with questions. Antenor didn't mind: this was when he summed up a lifetime's experience for his sons and gave them advice for the future. That day the conversation was enlivened by the topic of the training course. The *capacitador*, who was living in their village for the duration of the course, had managed to arouse interest not only in the people taking it, but in their families too. And so in the eyes of Antenor's sons, the instructor and the course he was running were like a door opening onto a new world.

"Why can't I come too?", asked Braulio, the thirteen-year-old, although his tone of voice showed that he didn't have much hope of taking part in the course.

"You know very well that you and your brother have to give Justinacha a hand, because she's still too small to look after the animals alone."

"What do you see on the telly?", asked twelve-year-old Inocencio. "And do they really speak Quechua?"

Smiling, Antenor replied: "Yes, the people on these videos actually speak Quechuan. They explain how to look after the sheep, how to protect them from parasites, and how to get better wool."

Antenor resisted his children's attempts to get his permission to take part in the course, and then interrupted their chat and asked them to start working with him again.

That afternoon, about an hour before sundown, Antenor and his sons went home. Even going downhill, their pace was as slow as it had been in the morning, because their legs were heavy with fatigue. The sun was setting when they reached the village. They walked along the little street, greeting their friends and neighbours who were also coming back from a day in the fields. Antenor and his family lived in a little low house. The inside was divided by a curtain into two poorly furnished rooms. In one there was an old wooden table surrounded by a few chairs; the other contained some bunks. With hearty appetites they ate the supper that Antenor's wife, Felipa, had prepared: potatoes, boiled vegetables and cheese.

After supper, Antenor and Felipa went to the meeting place where the training course was held.

Not many women attended the course, and Felipa felt she was in a privileged position compared with the many wives who had to stay at home on those evenings. It had been very nice for her to hear Antenor say that they should share this experience, because they supported their family together and would try together to improve their own and their children's future. That evening, as before, the TV film and the explanations in their language fascinated them and left them speechless. The *capacitador*, however, knew how to break the ice, and after the film he always managed to get the discussion going.

Antenor and Felipa walked home in silence. Although the training course offered them glimpses of possible improvements in their everyday lives, their hearts were saddened by the decision they had had to take some months earlier: to send their youngest children, Anto and Jolian, to stay with Felipa's sister at Cuzco until things got better. Bed-time was especially sad for these two parents: it used to be the time for telling their little ones fairy stories, which still had the power to make them dream themselves. Antenor felt the dull, grating pain of a father who had had to send away two of his children because he could not give them enough to eat.

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Clara de Souza was satisfied with the progress of the courses run by the four CESPAC instructors in the context of the PRODERM project in the Cuzco area. The courses involved thirty-six agricultural communities, in which the four *capacitadores* supervised by Clara had established good professional relations with all the *campesinos*. It had not been difficult to motivate the community leaders, who had already heard about the CESPAC courses previously run in other parts of the Cuzco Department. It had been a bit more difficult to get on friendly terms with the *campesinos* of those areas, because in their contacts with the central Peruvian authorities the Quechua ethnic group had always been hampered by the language barrier. But the television programmes CESPAC had produced for the area were in their language, and Quechua-speaking *capacitadores* had been specially chosen and trained. This had amazed the villagers, who had felt cut off from the rest of the country for centuries, and aroused enormous curiosity. They listened to every word that was said, responded to the challenges set by the teacher and took part in the discussions that followed every film show.

And yet, in the not-so-distant past, the Chequa, Chibcha and Aymará had created the Andean civilization, and Chequa was the language of the Incas, that is, the only indigenous language of South America of real cultural significance in the pre-Colombian age. Unfortunately, their Spanish conquerors attached no importance to the Inca empire,

whose political and social structure and way of living were the most advanced in pre-Colombian America. As a sociologist, Clara realized the terrible responsibility and moral debts the "old" European continent had taken on when it conquered the "new". For her those hard years were like paying a debt which others had brutally and pitilessly contracted long before she was born.

Clara loved her work. She put all her energy into it and received in return a deep gratification that filled her heart. It was a professional job requiring experience and determination in both the preparatory and the implementation phase. After a period of direct teaching in the villages, CESPAC had developed an organization that enabled it to intervene in development projects run by many public and private institutions, by providing audio-visual training courses and methodology. At the time Clara was in fact working on a project of this type. CESPAC had been asked to provide training courses for PRODERM, the development project which in this case was run jointly by the *Corporaciòn de Desarrollo de Cuzco* and the Government of the Netherlands. The first thing Clara did when she arrived in Cuzco in November was to select four people to be quickly trained as audiovisual instructors for the four project areas concerned: Anta, Paruro, Acomayo and Canas. These are all high-altitude regions; the soil is poor because of the scant irrigation and agriculture depends on rain-fall. The climate is harsh: heavy rains in

December, January and February; and in June, July and August the nights are freezing and the days extremely hot.

As always, it was hard to find four suitable instructors, because the ability to learn quickly and run a CESPAC course satisfactorily is rare. However, after interviewing several candidates presented by PRODERM, Clara had selected four young people who had the qualities needed for the job: they could speak Quechua, had experience of training in the field, respected the *campesina* culture, and knew how to work in a team.

Clara had run the course for the four *capacitadores* in Paruro, the second poorest region of Peru. The course structure was well-trying and included a six-week period of full immersion. The first week was devoted to the study of the TV equipment and power generator that permitted the flexible use of closed-circuit television in areas that had no electricity, and the second to the study of audiovisual teaching methodology, learning techniques and *campesina* life. Then the students spent three weeks in the rural communities to become more familiar with the production features of the micro-region. In the last week, they ran a preliminary, general course for the *campesinos* in order to practise this new type of teaching.

The instructors' training course ended a few days before Christmas and Clara went back to the Lima

office for a short period. So she was able to spend a few days with her family, who had not seen her for two months and missed no chance to remind her to think of herself and her own future (when this advice is given to a dear daughter under the age of thirty it really means: start a family of your own).

In mid-January Clara went back to Cuzco and for a month and a half directed the preparatory phase of the field research, which was perhaps the most difficult part of the whole programme. There was nothing set: the courses would have to be chosen on the basis of a careful evaluation of the local situation, followed by talks with the PRODERM experts (agronomists, livestock experts, and so on), community leaders and the farmers themselves. Clara assigned the areas to the four instructors, coordinated the research work, and at the end of February discussed their proposals for the training courses they thought would suit their needs best. As always, these were numerous, and priorities had to be set. After six weeks' work, the two training courses were chosen: one was on how to combat alpaca parasites; the other on family health and hygiene. The PRODERM technicians said they agreed with this evaluation and the agricultural communities approved the plan. The courses started at the beginning of March.

Antenor Atahualpa, of San Juan village, was among those who signed up for the course on how to combat scabies in alpaca sheep ("*Control de la sarna en alpacas*"). The first part went straight to the point:

what is the problem caused by this parasite and what harm does it do? The film showed scenes that were all too familiar to the farmers. The next stage illustrated the observation methods for recognizing the first signs of the illness; this was presented with the help of a cartoon which always made the audience relax. The third stage explained how to recognize "the enemy": the mite was filmed under the microscope. The final part showed how the pest spread, and how to prevent the various forms of contagion. The course was divided into nine twenty-minute lessons. Each lesson was followed by questions and answers, and simple, abundantly illustrated material was distributed summing up the main points.

Considering the great area covered and the large number of communities involved, the training courses were to continue until the end of the year, but Clara planned to stay in the area until the end of May and then go back to CESPAC in Lima. She had a precise objective in fixing the date in May, apart from her expectation that the courses would be running satisfactorily by then. After three months' supervision, she would hold an evaluation seminar with the four *capacitadores*, and decide with them on any corrections to be made to the method and contents of the course, so that it would respond even more closely to local requirements. Clara thought that the seminar would also boost the enthusiasm and commitment of the instructors, because they would be asked to comment on their own work, to appraise and

improve it after three months' experience in the field. Her second objective was to let the instructors carry on alone for a while, to test their degree of autonomy and responsibility in view of future engagements. In any case, Clara would check up on the situation on two occasions: the dates, in September and November, had already been announced.

There was still a month to go until the end of May. Clara was beginning to admit that this long period away from home was tiring, although that day at the end of April she started work very early in the morning. As always, she supplied the drive the project needed to go ahead. The pest control course was certainly proving a great success. The *campesinos* didn't miss a lesson; even those that had a little patch of land far away from where they lived left home before sunrise so that they could get back in time for the classes. They all listened in silence, as if spell-bound by the explanations given in their own language. They were all fascinated by the TV medium, which had reached their mountain villages and showed them with the impact of images new solutions to their age-old problems. After the TV shows, they asked questions, raised problems and expressed opinions. The mental stimulus was infectious, and Clara was pleased.

On her desk was the "log book" of the project she was responsible for. She remembered with interest every phase and every aspect, from preparation and research to the ongoing implementation phase. Next

week she was to examine the situation with Miguel Herrera, who had let her know he would come.

Clara's mind went over her first year at CESPAC, which she had joined after passing an entrance examination. She remembered the first training course for *pedagogos audiovisuales*, which was still rather rudimentary. Then Miguel Herrera came in and reorganized it completely, with the help of four or five technicians. She recalled with pleasure the first technical solutions applied to the many problems a TV crew has to cope with in rural and mountainous areas with no electricity or technical assistance.

Above all Clara appreciated the great respect for the experience and culture of the *campesinos* that was felt by the FAO expert who had conceived a new approach to communication in rural areas and tirelessly strove to get it adopted and applied. This was a basic motive she fully shared. The other characteristic she most admired in Miguel Herrera was his intellectual honesty, which made him seek the best possible means of attaining his objectives, without compromising on quality or effectiveness; this he did with great energy and determination. Another thing about Miguel that never failed to surprise her was his readiness to help his colleagues. One Saturday morning she had telephoned him to tell him that the clutch of her car had broken 500 kilometres away, as she was driving back to Lima after finishing a training course in an agricultural community. That very

evening Miguel turned up with a spare clutch after driving for hours on end on those awful roads.

"He demands a lot from himself, and so he demands a lot from others," Clara thought. Indeed, she had noticed more than once that Miguel got furious when people made mistakes, although after a while everything was forgiven and forgotten. He did, however, repeat things over and over again, to try to prevent mistakes.

Another thing about Miguel which Clara did not know whether to consider a virtue or a defect was his lack of "political" sensibility. She smiled as she remembered the concluding words of a speech he had made before an audience that included senior members of the Government, to mark the end of the second course: "Fifteen *pedagogos audiovisuales* are the best proof of the efficiency of the system, which goes ahead in spite of the mediocrity of many who do not believe in it."

Outside the sun was shining. Clara had had enough of documents. She left the office to have a walk and organize the next few days' work in her mind. She wanted to check once more how the courses were going in all four districts, so that she would be prepared for the visit of FAO expert Miguel Herrera.

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Some days later, in Cuzco, Miguel Herrera got up as usual at dawn. He had arrived on the evening of the previous day, Sunday, so that he would have the whole of Monday to start checking how the CESPAC training programme was going in the villages of the four districts covered by the PRODERM project. He loved the quiet hours of the morning, which contrasted with his rather impetuous character and his eagerness to achieve results. It was six o'clock, too early for breakfast, so he went out for a stroll. A bleary-eyed caretaker opened the door for him. Outside, all was quiet. With his hands in his pockets, Miguel walked through the narrow streets, watching the first signs of reawakening, which gave him an idea of the situation in the town.

What a fascinating place it was! Miguel perceived in the air, indefinably, the heritage of a lost culture, which had permeated the place and mysteriously made itself felt through the silence and dignity of pain.

The word town was too grand for this little urban area; low buildings lined a few streets which led to the main square. And here the ancient reserve of a difficult existence, so evident in the simplicity of the houses, came face to face with the flamboyancy of the *conquistadores* of old. In the centre of the square was a garden with flowerbeds and a few benches. On one side were some two-storey buildings and a portico with tourist shops; on the other stood a magnificent

baroque church, that looked rather pompous and out of keeping with the rest.

Miguel looked beyond the square to the mountains standing out against the sky, whose deep blue was becoming lighter with the first rays of the sun. He walked through the deserted porticos, and along the sloping streets leading to his hotel. Coming round a corner, he suddenly stopped, attracted by a noise from the base of a news-stand that was still shut. What could it be? All of a sudden, the front part of the base of the news-stand was pushed forward by a bare arm; then a boy of about seven peered sleepily out. He crawled on to the pavement and Miguel got a better view of him. Yes, he could not be more than seven or eight; his shorts were patched, his legs and feet bare. His features were Quechuan, his head was too big for his slender torso, and his great eyes had the mournful expression of one who has seen the hard things of life, but, perhaps because of his youth, still hopes to change them.

The boy remained kneeling on the road, near the opening at the base of the news-stand and pulled another sweater over the one he was already wearing. Then he lifted the opening up again and slipped the front half of his body inside, so that the little door rested on his back. Miguel began to see what the boy was doing: with surprising care for one of his age, he was dressing a child of about four who could be glimpsed through the little door. It only took about a minute or two, but to Miguel it seemed eternal, like

the intensity of the feelings that animated the scene. The smaller child came out and stood up in front of the bigger one, who, still kneeling, finished dressing him with deft movements, with a loving look and a smile that lit up his face. Miguel felt a shudder down his spine: in a flash he had seen - or remembered - how a seven-year-old child can already be grown up.

He went up to the two children, had a word with them and found out about the work at the news-stand. The children got up early, because it took quite a time to take down all the boards round the kiosk and they wanted to be ready for the first people going to open the shops and few offices of Cuzco. Later, they would be joined by their uncle, who would bring the newspapers he collected every morning from the station. The children were not from Cuzco and their father was coming to fetch them at the end of the winter and take them home to their village. Miguel bought a copy of every paper, promising that he would come back the next morning to buy the new ones, and started walking towards his hotel. Turning back after a few steps, he saw the two children taking the boards down from the news-stand. These were the experiences that drove Miguel on, in his determination to help change the harsh living conditions of these people.

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Three days later, Miguel Herrera was flying back to Lima. The field check on the progress of the CESPAC project in the Cuzco area had been highly satisfactory. Accompanied by the Regional Unit Coordinator and Clara de Souza, he had visited various communities involved in the project and talked with the village leaders and the *campesinos*. His expert eye and feeling for rural life immediately caught the air of change in the villages. He had seen it on the villagers' faces, felt it in their tone of voice when they talked to each other and above all in the group discussions after the evening classes.

He had spent his second evening in the village of San Juan in the province of Paruro, where the battle against the alpaca parasites was being waged. During the lesson he saw the concentration on the faces of the forty *campesinos* as they watched the film. Afterwards they asked many questions on serious, practical problems; the instructor showed his ability as a coordinator, responding promptly and drawing everyone into the discussion.

Even more encouraging than these factual and professional considerations, was the sight of the *campesinos* on their way home: usually each individual walked alone, in silence. But this time it was different: they went home in groups of three or four, continuing the lively discussion on the topics presented that evening. Miguel knew that this was the surest sign that a change was coming about. The

mental stimulus and the prospect of solving such important problems had prompted a reaction that was most promising for their future. All this was proof that the right topic had been chosen for the lesson, the selection and training of the *capacitador* carefully done and the film correctly focused. He was sure that the best way to respond to the needs of these communities was always to offer them in their own area and their own language new solutions to their problems and stimulus for change, and that the time and care CESPAC put into the films with the help of scientists, university professors and experts was well spent.

Miguel leaned back a bit and pulled down the tray in front of him. The steward gave him a cup of coffee; he could hardly wait to drink it and smoke a cigarette. He sipped the coffee and watched the pale blue smoke rising and being drawn into an air vent. The journey had been tiring and he felt weary, but satisfied. He wrinkled his brow when he thought of the initial difficulties raised mainly by those who, years before, had not believed it possible to teach the *campesinos* in Peru's many villages using an innovative technique like that of closed circuit television. He thought of the doubts of others who in that early phase did not believe it was possible to train *pedagogos audiovisuales* who would be able to carry out in a professional, competent manner all the tasks involved, which in the developed countries were systematically divided up among a group of experts.

Like the high achiever he was, Miguel smiled to remember how the results had belied the doubters, and enabled him to carry on with determination, year after year. The hundreds of TV courses produced stemmed from socio-economic research in the field. More than a hundred *pedagogos audiovisuales* and about the same number of *capacitadores* had been trained. Thousands of courses had been run for more than 100,000 *campesinos*, and had had an obviously beneficial effect on the quality of life of the rural communities involved in the programme. Last but not least, a well-planned Peruvian structure had been created, with an excellent staff and management.

Miguel smiled when he remembered the clashes he had had with the national executive Director General of CESPAC, the Peruvian Manuel García. Because of differences of character, Miguel at times disagreed with some of Manuel's approaches, but he had always held him in great esteem and admired his remarkable mental agility and great devotion to work. And yet, in spite of this esteem, which was certainly reciprocal, their relationship had always been, one might say... strong! At times, they argued a point quite fiercely ("I got pretty het up," Miguel admitted, looking back on it), but as they moved to the next point on the agenda, which might well involve other people as well, the tones of their voices became calmer and peace reigned again. In that relationship, each of them had been true to himself, and if it were possible to measure the patience that had sometimes been needed

not to spoil it, Miguel knew very well that the bigger share would fall to Manuel, or "Manolo" - the diminutive form Miguel used when he mentioned the senior Peruvian member of CESPAC. Over the years, Manolo had proved to be a valuable ally in solving the political and economic problems the project had come up against. Once he had confided to Miguel, "I feel as if I were pushing a boulder up a mountain and the peak were getting further and further away".

"But the results speak for themselves," thought Miguel, stubbing out his cigarette in the ashtray on the arm of his seat, and leaning his head on the head-rest. His prime objective had been to make CESPAC an organization that could work properly even without him. But it was equally important to ensure that when he left to take up another job, the structure would still be inspired by his vision, commitment and dedication. With Manolo at the head of CESPAC, Miguel felt that this objective was now within his grasp.

Another prospect also aroused his enthusiasm: "exporting" the Peruvian project's technology and experience to other Latin American countries and other parts of the world. Some steps had already been taken in that direction: CESPAC had been visited by commissions from other South American countries, as well as an Indian Commission and the Chinese National Director for Agriculture and Fisheries, who had come to Lima with a specific problem: how to foster the progress of the hundreds of millions of peasants who lived in China's mountain communi-

ties. South Korea had also made contact and invited two CESPAC consultants to start a project similar to the Peruvian one. This prospect made Miguel feel deeply satisfied and at the same time fearful, like a father who sees the son he has trained embarking upon life.

Miguel felt as though fatigue were about to overcome him, but his thoughts and memories kept him awake for a while. He looked out of the window at the land to which he had devoted so many years of work and smiled as he remembered how many times, in all those years, it had seemed to everybody that international support for the project could not continue. In fact, it had always been difficult to balance the budget. The very survival of the project had often been a major cause of concern and Miguel remembered that on various occasions only the desperate efforts in Peru and at FAO headquarters in Rome had made it possible to raise funds at the last minute. The continuation of the project had finally been assured by a vital factor, which was also a precise indication of how CESPAC's services were evaluated: the project started to generate its own income. Miguel smiled again as he remembered how the change began, when some agricultural cooperatives had offered to support, at least in part, the courses run in their communities. So, little by little, national and international organizations had started to ask for CESPAC's services and contributed to the expenses.

## ON THE MOUNTAINS OF PERU

Miguel felt himself nodding off. He thought of his wife and their two children, and told himself once again that he would try to spend more time with them. That was a nice thought to go to sleep with: his family. His wife, the one and only companion of his life, with whom he had shared the joys, the tensions and the difficult moments of all those years, as well as the uncertainty when his contracts were due for renewal. And his two sons: when he came home tired out in the evenings, they would make him feel at peace with the spontaneity and candour of youth. Like that evening when Andrés, who was very conscious of being the elder son, had greeted him with a serious air and asked him in a sympathetic tone, "Daddy, did you meet many bureaucrats today?" The boy was only seven at the time.

Miguel dozed off, happy to think that he would get home that evening, even though it would be very late.

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One Saturday a few weeks later, it was market day in Cuzco. People from neighbouring villages had set out their wares under the porticos of the main square, Plaza de Armas, and were showing them to the passers-by, but without pressing them to buy. In fact the relaxed atmosphere of that market was something

that never failed to surprise the tourists, who were always looking for traces of Inca culture without recognizing it when it was before their eyes. Food was not sold here, but in a less central area; the goods for sale were mainly garments of rough wool; the style showed that they were made by artisans and the lively colour combinations were not very popular with the tourists.

In a little street near the square, the two children of Antenor Atahualpa who were staying with their aunt and uncle in Cuzco could hardly wait for evening to arrive. Anto especially was looking forward to it impatiently, as he worked through the day on the news-stand with his uncle, keeping one eye on the passers-by and the other on little Jolián who was playing nearby. For lunch they had bread and cheese, but that evening, as it was market day, the two brothers would have dinner in the restaurant on the square and they would certainly have hot soup with *tarwi*, which they loved.

At last, at about seven o'clock, the moment arrived. While his uncle was putting the papers away and starting to set up the boards round the news-stand, Anto took Jolián by the hand and led him towards the big square. They passed by the stalls and stopped in front of the toy stall, looking at the games and puppets and pointing at the ones that caught their fancy. After a while, Anto tugged his brother away and walked straight to the restaurant, with Jolián skipping along beside him. They stopped on the

threshold and looked around. As usual, they were welcomed with a smile by the proprietor, a friend of their aunt and uncle, who made them sit on a bench beside a long table, just like two proper clients.

For them this welcome was just as important, perhaps more important, than the food. Although they lived with their relations, Anto and Jolián felt a bit homesick and any expression of sympathy and affection warmed their hearts. Sitting at the table, the two children immediately reached for the bread basket. Without saying a word, so as not to disturb the groups of tourists sitting at the other tables, their host brought them two big plates of steaming soup. Anto and Jolián started to eat in silence, dipping in lots of bread and enjoying every mouthful.

As luck would have it, that very evening (a few weeks after Miguel Herrera's visit to Cuzco), Clara de Souza had accepted an invitation to dine in the restaurant with a young North American representative of a Catholic association she had recently met in Cuzco. The two young women were sitting at the only table still partly free, where Anto and Jolián had been given a place. Both were struck by the seriousness of the two children silently eating their soup, which they obviously found delicious. They both knew how reserved the Quechuan people are, and instead of talking to the children immediately, just smiled at them and continued talking to each other in English.

"In the community where we are now," the young North American lady was saying, "it would be

really useful if I could show a programme on the health and hygiene of mothers during pregnancy and childbirth."

"We have a whole course on health and hygiene," Clara replied, "and one part of the course deals specifically with pregnancy and childbirth."

"Do you think you could lend me the film for a few days?" asked her companion.

"Yes, but how would you project it?" said Clara, "It's not just a question of the film; I'd have to lend you the project equipment as well and send you a technician who knows how to make it work."

"Please try, Clara," said the other, "the film would be really useful right now: just think, there are seven expectant mothers in the community!"

"All right, I'll make an exception this time. Let me see the programme," said Clara, opening the diary she always carried with her. "Let's see - I could send you everything for just two days, Thursday and Friday of next week. But you will have to pay for the petrol for the transport, and the technician's board and lodging. Then, if the programme is a success, you could get your management to ask mine to do a whole course of health and hygiene in the communities you operate in."

"Terrific! Thanks awfully... on behalf of the seven mothers-to-be as well."

The two young women were a living example of the joy of serving. They smiled happily, silent for a

few moments. Then Clara turned to the children and asked:

"Can you advise us what to order? Was the soup good?"

"Super!" Anto replied.

"I'll say!" echoed Jolián.

"Do you come here often?" asked Clara.

"Every time there's a market in the big square," Anto replied, as he carefully cleaned his plate with the last bit of bread.

"But you're not from here, are you?"

"No, we come from San Juan."

"Which San Juan, the one in the province of Paruro?" asked Clara, interpreting the question for her friend, who, not knowing Quechua, could not take part in the conversation.

"That's the one," Anto replied.

"And what are you doing in Cuzco?"

"We've got to stay with our uncle and aunt until dad can come and take us home," replied Anto, in a voice that betrayed a sadness concealed with dignity, "and meanwhile we're working at the news-stand."

"Ah, they're the ones!" thought Clara, remembering the early morning scene at Cuzco that Miguel had told her about. She understood the situation at once, and continued in an encouraging tone:

"Every now and then my work takes me to San Juan. Would you like me to take a message to your family?"

"Yes, please," said Anto, "tell my father, Antenor Atahualpa, that Jolián is fine and so am I." Then after a pause he added, "But tell him to come and get us soon."

"Of course," said Clara, "I'll be seeing him next week and I'll certainly tell him."

"We've got to go now," said Anto, moving along the bench and round the table.

The two young women got up to let the children go by, and gave each of them a smile and a pat on the head. The children stopped in front of the table for a moment to say good-bye. Then they waved to their host, slipped out, and ran back to the news-stand. When they arrived their uncle had finished closing up and was waiting for them. He told them to be good, bid them goodnight, opened the little door and let them into the news-stand.

Anto listened to his uncle's retreating footsteps. Lying on his makeshift bed with his little brother beside him, he felt a pang of fear, as he did every evening. But he gritted his teeth and put a bold face on it, because he knew he had to make Jolián brave too. Jolián snuggled up to him and asked the inevitable question:

"Will you tell me a story, Anto?"

"Of course!" Anto replied, "I'll tell you a lovely one." and remembering the stories he had heard his mummy and daddy relate so often, he began to tell his brother all about fairies and flying carpets.

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In San Juan, month after month, the dual effect of the training courses was becoming increasingly visible.

On the practical, tangible level, the results could be seen in the houses and in the stables. Many things were changing in the houses, such as the method of conserving drinking water: the hygienic precautions taken avoided many intestinal infections; the method of washing, preparing and cooking food was having the same beneficial result; the new way of caring for newborn babies made them sleep better and cry less; they had better complexions and were regularly taken to the village infirmary for their vaccinations. Week after week in the stables, the *campesinos* saw with their own eyes the battle against animal parasites being won; now it was waged with greater understanding of the problem and the adoption of new and more effective methods of prevention and cure.

The second kind of change was less tangible, but equally apparent. You could see it in the way people led their everyday lives: their new-found confidence put their relations with their families and the rest of the community on a new basis.

One day in November, Clara de Souza arrived in the village at about three in the afternoon to make a

final check on the way the project was going. She parked her car and went straight to the house of the *capacitador*. The instructor was running the two CESPAC courses at San Juan and other villages in the province of Paruro very efficiently, assisted by two experts who explained the more complex, specific matters.

The check-up programme Clara intended to follow was straightforward and to the point: she would visit the *capacitadores* working in the four provinces involved in the project; meet the village leaders of each village, accompanied by the instructor concerned; attend the evening classes run in four different villages, one in each province; and then have a final meeting with all four instructors to make an overall evaluation.

Clara entered the home of the first *capacitador* and saw him sitting in front of a small, rudimentary desk, intent on writing his notes. He looked up and came to meet her, holding out his hand and smiling:

"Nice to see you Clara! Did you have a good trip?"

"Yes, thanks; these jeeps are terrific for climbing up these little roads. How's it going?"

"Not too bad," he replied, "The people have started to see the first results of the methods we discussed together, and talk about them with great satisfaction." "Good!" said Clara, "Let's go over what they said, to see what struck them most and what topics were most discussed."

They sat down facing each other at the desk, and the instructor described the way the courses were going in the villages he operated in. After a detailed discussion lasting nearly two hours, Clara said, "Well done! Things are going really well. The villagers should be really grateful to you."

"They are showing me their gratitude," replied the instructor. "When I go round the villages outside the lesson times, they are all very nice to me, and sometimes surprisingly talkative. They ask me in, and I have a chat with them in their homes."

The two of them went out for a short walk in the village. Clara's watchful eye immediately perceived signs of renewal and noted their intensity. They walked in silence, each knowing what the other was noticing, and pleased with the results. At that hour the women were beginning to prepare supper, the children were taking the animals back to the stables, and the men were coming home from their work in the fields. Clara and the *capacitador* went back to the centre of the village to say hello to some of the community administrators and have a bite to eat at the store. After supper, Clara settled in at her lodging and the instructor went back to his to prepare the material for the evening's lesson.

After about half an hour, they met again in the central area where the meetings were held. The first *campesinos* were starting to arrive. They did not come in in silence and sit silently waiting for the lesson to start. Their attitudes and the general

atmosphere were different now. They came into the courtyard tent smiling, exchanged greetings with the instructor, and started to chat with the other students. Unlike the *capacitador*, Clara did not know all the students, but many faces were familiar to her. Some people came up to say hello, and she was particularly glad to see Antenor and Felipa Atahualpa - a few months earlier she had managed to take them the message from their two youngest children.

"Good day, Miss Clara!" said Antenor.

"How are you, Miss Clara?" asked Felipa.

"Good day to you both," replied Clara, "I'm very well; and how are you?"

"Very well, thank you," said Antenor.

"And your children?" asked Clara.

"They're very well too," replied their father. "The two eldest are a great help, not only in the fields, but also in the stables in the evenings. You should see the lovely fleeces the alpaca have now, thanks to all we have learnt!"

"I really miss Anto and Jolián, though," sighed their mother.

"So do I. But I'll bring them home for Christmas and they won't have to go away again," said their father. As he said this, Antenor looked at Clara, and his gaze expressed all the gratitude he could not put into words.

"How lovely!" said Clara. "You'll all be together at Christmas!"

"Yes, Christmas all together," echoed Antenor, "and in January I'll send those two little rascals to school!"

Antenor and Felipa took their usual places in the front row. Suddenly silence fell in the tent. The lesson began.

At the end of the week, Clara had a final talk with the Coordinator of the Regional Unit in Cuzco and then took the plane to Lima. Back in town, she spent the week-end with her family and on Monday morning resumed her work at CESPAC.

She and the TV production manager discussed specific issues raised by the *campesinos* during the courses. These points would be dealt with in the forthcoming TV programmes.

Next, she went to say hello to Miguel Herrera. His secretary announced her and she went into his little office. Miguel was at his desk poring over some documents in a cloud of smoke; the ash-tray was already half full. When she came in, Miguel went over to the window and threw it wide open.

"Good morning, Miguel!" said Clara.

"Hi, Clara, welcome back," answered Miguel.

"I can come back later, if you're busy."

"Don't go; fifteen minutes' break will do us good."

"Old papers and bureaucracy, eh?"

"No, quite the contrary," answered Miguel. "I am preparing the mid-term report on the second

phase of the project. The meeting at FAO headquarters is very soon and, as you know, it will be the starting point for the final years of this project. So it's not old papers and bureaucracy this time. I realise that preparing this document makes me sum up the situation, analyse all aspects of the project and evaluate its current and future effectiveness. And then there's that other matter, the extension of the project to other Latin American countries - what an interesting prospect! But tell me, how did it go in Cuzco?"

"Very well. The courses are well run and the people like them. I think things are beginning to change in those villages. You know, you can see the first signs of reawakening: people talk more, the streets are livelier, and the villagers take part in the courses with more enthusiasm now that the first tangible results can be seen..."

"Yes, those are the right signs," replied Miguel, "and what about the four *capacitadores*?"

"They're fine. All four are promising, and one is ready for the next step. I shall ask him to take part in the selection for the *pedagogs audiovisual* course starting in February."

"Ah, you mean the instructor based in the village of San Juan, in Paruro Province," said Miguel.

Clara smiled without surprise, because in those years she had come to recognize Miguel's ability to grasp the potential of each person he worked with.

"Yes, that's the one. You spotted him, of course. He's the best of the four: he's willing to learn and has the right attitude to the job. He devotes himself wholeheartedly to what he is doing. He is respected by the *campesinos* and they behave affectionately towards him. You know the simple but significant ways in which the villagers show their gratitude."

"February's fine. CESPAC's course for PRODERM ends in December, and in January the candidates will be chosen for the next *pedagogía audiovisual* course."

"That's right. He will just have time to spend Christmas with his family."

"Are you sure he'll accept?" asked Miguel.

"I haven't said anything to him yet, but I'm sure he will," said Clara. "It makes him happy to be able to give something of himself to people. I saw it in his eyes in the lessons and group discussions. The *campesinos* can sense it at once. By the way, I have some good news for you."

"What's that?" asked Miguel curiously.

"You remember those two children at Cuzco, the ones in the news-stand?"

"Of course - I often think of them."

"Their father is going to bring them home for Christmas, and in January he's sending them to school."

Miguel felt a lump in his throat. He jumped up, turned his back on Clara and began fiddling with a window catch, trying to stifle his emotion. Clara got up too, and quietly left the room.

## Conclusion

The FAO project described in this story is project PER/76/003, which was implemented in two phases, without a break, over a period of ten years. The FAO Publications Development Communication Case Study on this project ends with the following considerations:

"It was in the quest for solutions to the problems of grassroot information and training that Peru, in the mid-1970s, embarked on a course that led to the most extensive experience yet in the use of video in rural areas of a Third World country. More than 1,000 video programmes of about 20 minutes' duration each have been made, and they have been used with more than 150,000 farmers. More than 150 Peruvians have been trained in the production and use of video programmes for rural development, and a further 200 have been trained in the use only of the programmes... and the Project, quite apart from the work it has done in Peru, has provided advisory and training services to the following countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Colombia, El Salvador, Paraguay, Uruguay, India, China, South Korea, Cape Verde and Mali...

"At many times during the years covered above, it seemed as though international support for the Project could not be continued, and that the adviser who had really been the driving force behind getting the Project started in the first place - and who won FAO's prize, known as the Sen Award, for the best field expert in 1983 - would have to leave. And at no time did the Project ever have the resources it really needed to operate properly in the field. It has always been a hand-to-mouth existence, and survival itself was often the main concern: on several occasions, only desperate efforts in Peru and in FAO headquarters came up with a last-minute rescue..."

The FAO and CESPAC experts in the story are real people, although the name of the FAO member is different.

After the project ended, Miguel Herrera was for many years head of audio-visual communications development in many rural areas of Latin America.

The village of San Juan and its inhabitants, though imaginary, represent the Peruvian situation that I personally experienced.



## A DAY IN GUANACASTE

*It takes skilled musicians and a good director to perform beautiful music well. But a harmonious result can also be achieved by a group of technicians of different nationalities and experience, each intent on playing his part and all concentrating on the same note: service.*



The alarm clock rang at half past five in the morning and Hans Pietersen reached out his hand, groped for it on the bedside table and reduced it to silence. He stayed under the sheet a few more minutes while he heard his wife starting to get up, yawning.

"Come on Hans, time to get up," said Karin, slipping on her dressing-gown.

Opening his eyes and overcoming his drowsiness, Hans got up, shaved and hurriedly prepared for the journey he had to make that day: a few hours' drive from San José, in Costa Rica, to the province of Guanacaste, in the northwest of the country, where he had arranged a meeting with his collaborators. Their objective: to decide on the choice of a pilot zone for that area, for a five-year FAO project in Costa Rica that had started a few months earlier.

Picking up his travelling bag his wife had got ready for him the evening before, he paused by the bedroom of his eleven-year-old daughter Elise and gently opened the door to give her a farewell look. He

smiled in her direction in the half light of the room and was about to close the door noiselessly when Elise turned his way and said in a sleepy voice:

"Bye, daddy, you off already?"

"Yes, dear; I have more than three hours' drive so I have to start early."

"Daddy, will you be back in time for the match?", Elise asked.

"I really hope so," said Hans, "but I can't promise."

"Oh, do, daddy," said Elise, her voice now without a trace of sleep in it, "you've been promising me for so long, it'll be a lovely game and we've already got the tickets."

"Let me see how the work goes today, sweetheart. I'll call you this evening to tell you if I can make it back tomorrow." He walked over to her bed and stroked her forehead. She murmured "see you soon, then", but didn't sound very convinced.

Hans went downstairs and over to the little room where his wife had prepared breakfast. He sat down and started eating, while Karin sipped her coffee. They spoke a few words about Elise and her school, then Hans got to his feet, saying: "See you later, then, Karin, it's time for me to be going."

"Have a good trip, dear," said Karin, "you will be able to make it back home by tomorrow evening, won't you? It means so much to Elise, going to see the basketball match with you."

"First I have to see how the work goes today," replied Hans, "I hope I can make it, but I can't promise. I'll call you this evening. 'Bye now."

He gave her a kiss and walked out into the small patio in front of the house and boarded the jeep that FAO had made available to him. Backing out through the small gateway, he gave Karin another wave and blew her a kiss.

At six in the morning the congested traffic of San José hardly existed and Hans found no difficulty in getting onto the road that would take him to the province of Guanacaste.

He felt at his ease at the wheel, with a few hours of driving through Costa Rica before him. As was often the case when he was starting off on a journey alone, he called to mind with a smile his feelings when he had made his first journey. He was eleven years old and had run away from home, with one of those unforeseeable, absurd decisions children of that age sometimes reach, and for a whole day he had savoured to the full the feeling of risk and adventure.

"Now I'm forty-three but I still have the same rolling-stone temperament as then!" thought Hans. "I don't think I could bear office life, always in the same place, with fixed hours."

A Dutchman, born and brought up in Amsterdam until he took his degree in geology, he had at first indulged his adventurous streak by going in for jazz music - alongside his university studies - which gave

him those moments of improvisation and distraction that in some way suited his inclination for variety and exploration. But after his degree he had really let his temperament as a roamer have its head and had had various jobs in the sector in which he was becoming gradually more specialized: territorial assessment and management and soil conservation techniques.

Hans smiled as he thought back to his early years of working in Indonesia, a period he always recalled with pleasure. The profile of his professional activity was already taking shape in those years, as territorial assessment included various technical input hypotheses, such as the introduction of new irrigation systems or better soil conservation. Then he had worked on a project in Bolivia, and it was there that he had started developing specific experience of soil conservation techniques. The next period, too, a one-year project in Saudi Arabia, from the standpoint of assessing the territory, had included also the study of techniques to protect it against sandstorms.

In all those years Hans had received assignments both from FAO and from the Dutch Government, and so he had worked in a variety of operational contexts, enriching his knowledge of the sector, but at the same time also gaining excellent experience in terms of human relations.

After the Saudi Arabian project, he had spent three years in Rome at FAO headquarters, taking part in a research and work group in the Land and Water Development Division.

"Those three years in Rome were really very interesting," thought Hans, abruptly pulling the steering-wheel over so as to avoid a big hole in the middle of the road. "Trips all over the world, development projects, emergency missions... I wasn't still a single moment!"

The other thing that Hans remembered with great pleasure about that Rome period was the group of technicians with whom he had worked and talked things over. They were wonderful people, from every country, of great professional capability, and certainly among the persons best prepared in the world in that sector. All those constructive meetings he recalled! And it had been a pleasure making all those professional friendships, now and again revived by meetings at international conventions and seminars. In that way he was able, at least once a year, to meet and keep up contacts with that group of colleagues working in various corners of the globe.

Hans noticed that the road was becoming wider and so he thought this was the right place to pull in and have another drink of coffee. He drew up by the edge of the road, in the shade of a splendid tree, switched off the engine and took out a small thermos flask that Karin had prepared for his trip. He poured himself some coffee in the thermos cup and, as he was sipping it, his thoughts went back home to his wife.

What a marvellous woman Karin was! Her lovely oriental features, her big expressive eyes, her whole person that emanated beauty, gentleness and kindness

of heart. To him, a wanderer who felt at home in the most varied places and among people of different cultures and nationalities, Karin was the best companion he could ever have. Born in Amsterdam of Indonesian parents, Karin was an extraordinary Dutch citizen. In her, the Dutch language became more musical, and those aspects of the Dutch temperament midway between the adventurous and the mercantile were filtered and reflected by a note of conscious serenity inherited from the culture of her ancestors.

Finishing his coffee, Hans closed the thermos and started off again. The road, after running through a mountainous region, now descended to a lower level and wound its way along valleys full of greenery and wooded places. Hans liked Costa Rica. He had been here the first time some years ago, on a brief one-week mission from El Salvador. He remembered clearly that the moment he had arrived in Costa Rica he had received the news that the day before El Salvador had been shaken by a terrible earthquake that had caused many victims and resulted in widespread devastation. Although working intensely, the days of that week were spent with nervousness and apprehension, which had not allowed him to observe those places serenely. The quick impression he had gained of it, however, was one of a lovely green country with frequent and considerable changes in elevation, a level of life fairly high by South American

standards, and a social life that seemed quite well organized.

Then he had come back to Costa Rica as a soil conservation expert on behalf of the Dutch Government, which had included him in a work group carrying out a survey of the territory with a view to soil defence and conservation.

"A very good period, there's no doubt about that," thought Hans, calling to mind the many actions carried out on the territory, the preparation of the training courses and then holding them for the benefit of local personnel.

He slowed down to have a look at the panorama: the road was still a bit higher than the countryside which was taking shape and his gaze wandered over broad green areas. Then he speeded up again and, keeping a careful check on the road, he again thought back to the FAO project on which he was engaged in Costa Rica in this period. Thinking, even intensely, and driving at the same time was something quite natural for Hans. At times it happened that he had to drive for a whole hour without one moment's uncertainty, simultaneously thinking over facts and situations that fully absorbed his conscious attention, and subsequently finding himself at a certain point of his route without remembering a single yard of the drive.

The starting point was extremely clear to Hans. In Costa Rica, the contribution of agriculture and of stockraising to the gross domestic product had been

diminishing until it had reached a point below the threshold of 20 percent, while industrial output and the services had been increasing at the same time. This situation, quite natural for the socio-economic development of many western countries in which agriculture has allowed industry and the services to take pride of place in productive activity, with an upturn in the quality of life, did not appear wholly desirable for Costa Rica. In fact, although there had been such a rapid and substantial drop in productive capacity, exports of agricultural products still accounted for about 70 percent of the hard currency coming into the country, and this made the fact more and more evident that, from this standpoint, agriculture retained its strategic value for the economy of Costa Rica.

Another factor of great importance was the difficult situation of the smallholders, about ninety thousand of them in a country with 2,700,000 inhabitants. In fact, while the medium- and large-sized farms were restructured and modernized, small farmers went on becoming weaker due to important factors such as: the scarcity of cultivated land and its constant erosion and limited access to credit, to the channels of distribution and to technical assistance. For these reasons, large tracts of hardly cultivated land had started showing serious lacks of productivity.

Soil erosion was a problem felt above all in those parts of the country where there was scarce intensity of cultivation and where annual methods of cultivation

of a subsistence type existed, which led to a gradual worsening of the situation of the small-scale producers. Erosion was mainly due - and this Hans knew very well - to the force of the rain which pounded down and had such a devastating effect unless countered by proper cropping and soil defence techniques. Furthermore, deforestation, which made the problem more acute, was increasing also because of the smallholders who in that way created new lands to cultivate. And all the time their situation went on being one of constant struggling to obtain the indispensable minimum for survival, it was natural that such an objective took priority for them over any considerations of medium- and long-term exploiting of resources.

Within the framework of a wide-ranging programme to relaunch agriculture in Costa Rica, soil defence therefore played an important role, which had led to the creation of the National Soil and Water Conservation Service (*Servicio Nacional de Conservación de Suelos y Aguas*, or SENACSA), an initial step that reflected the great importance attached by the Government to this sector.

Hans was well aware that it was not an easy task. From his very first visit to Costa Rica, several years earlier, he had observed that the country was characterized by considerable differences in elevation. Actually, more than 50 percent of the territory has gradients of more than 30 percent and around 40 percent of the rural area of the country is exposed to

potential soil losses. All this meant that very many poor people lived poorly and would live even worse in the near future, unless provision was made to study a project to increase productivity and conserve resources.

This being the reference framework, the Government of Costa Rica had reached the absolutely right conclusion that the application of soil conservation techniques had to form an important part of the programme of rural development.

Hans had studied with an expert eye the documentation of the project carried out between 1985 and 1989 jointly by FAO and by the Costa Rican Government, with financing by the Italian Government. He himself had had contacts with a number of research groups for the assessment of the parts of the country exposed to the danger of erosion. The project funded by the Italian Government had been a basic one, which had laid the foundations for technical assistance and training for personnel of the national structures, and which had led to the establishment of SENACSA and the preparation of a national soil conservation plan.

"Things don't always go smoothly," thought Hans, "especially when politics are involved." He failed to understand why, in spite of the very important and promising results achieved in that five-year span, the Italian Government had not supported the prospect of a second, executive phase.

At the urgings of the Costa Rican Government, FAO had therefore approved an annual programme of technical cooperation to start on the preparation of this second phase, with the prospect of then launching a joint programme with the support of the Dutch Government, which had shown its interest in financing the continuation of external technical assistance to SENACSA. This annual programme had taken the concrete form of sending a work group, consisting of representatives of the Costa Rican Government, of FAO and of the Dutch Government, to study goals and operational programmes for a second phase of technical assistance in soil conservation, making this known and having it adopted by the Costa Rican smallholders. Thus, during that year an important preparatory phase had been carried out, in which Hans had participated; and this phase had concluded with the drawing up of a joint five-year programme between FAO and the Costa Rican Government, with the financial backing of the Dutch Government.

Just over two hours had passed since Hans had left San José. The road had become completely flat and the broad expanse of countryside surrounding it was dotted with enormous, splendid trees with thick foliage.

"There's no soil erosion problem here," thought Hans. "The area in which we are choosing the pilot zone for our project is quite different! There the

cultivated land is steeply sloping and the same amount of rain that benefits the soil here causes severe erosion there."

The operational checking and testing of the different methods studied during the previous, five-year project to combat soil erosion were decidedly limited in the different regions of the country. In general, however, Hans was well aware of the need to set the actions to combat soil erosion in an agricultural development system that would help to improve the quality of life of small farmers by means of a number of operational improvements. These ranged from the possibility of training in new cultivation techniques to the availability of credit granted on the basis of better productivity forecasts for their land.

This was certainly a good frame of reference, and the experience Hans had gained over the years seemed eminently appropriate for the FAO head of this project. In fact, a programme that involved the central and regional Costa Rican authorities, that grouped together FAO experts of different nationalities and was based on the different local situations of small farmers, small communities and local cooperatives, needed a man who had two fundamental qualities: excellent technical experience, and coordination and management capabilities based on his powers of persuasion. Such a man was Hans.

And so Hans Pietersen had been chosen as the FAO technical head of the five-year programme financed by the Government of the Netherlands,

which followed the five-year programme that had been financed by the Italian Government.

The previous programme had laid the bases of research and structure, such as: the formulation and testing of methods of conservation, use and intensive cultivation of the land; the beginning of the establishment of a national service focused on soil conservation; the compilation of maps and the setting up of a data-base for the whole country; and the training of technical staff at the central level.

The current programme aimed at transferring the knowledge of soil and water conservation techniques to the producers. This was to be done by taking action at the local level, to collect evidence of the soundness of the plan; then going up to the national level and integrating this experience with other national experiences; this would contribute to the formulation of a general plan of medium- and long-term agricultural development for the whole country.

Hans knew very well that persuasion would be the key element in this programme. It was the best way to win over a group of small farmers motivated to participate in the initial implementation of the soil conservation programme in the pilot areas selected by FAO experts and technicians in conjunction with Costa Rican technicians.

There were many ways of motivating the small farmers and their associations. Hans' approach to this was centred on the cost-benefit ratio.

"If you give one thing to Peter and another to Paul, you find yourself snowed under with requests: for cars, petrol, grants - and motivation goes by the board!"

The approach he had asked his colleagues to take in contacting the producers and their cooperatives emphasized the intelligent, direct involvement of the small farmer, who should consider participation in the soil conservation programme as the only effective means of increasing the productivity of his land, through his own work and specially developed new techniques. To persuade them to take part in the programme and sustain their interest, they offered the small farmers and their broader communities the prospect of access to loans with repayment in instalments, linked to the increase in productivity.

"This system will give them grounds for taking part in the project with conviction," thought Hans, "because, with this type of financing, the farmers will realize that we are proposing something we believe in ourselves."

The constructive, convinced participation of the small farmers and their cooperatives had been judged very important by everyone. In fact, Hans knew that this was the key to the success of the whole project. The small farmer should be able to receive technical assistance for the adoption of conservation and soil care practices, in accordance with his situation and possibilities. The implementation of the project in four pilot areas representative of agricultural condi-

tions in Costa Rica was intended to provide empirical evidence of the soundness of the methods of intervention. It would then be possible to prepare a national plan likely to obtain the acceptance and support of the small farmers and their associations.

Hans remembered almost word for word how this intervention strategy had been described:

"The technical strategy of the project will consist in harmonizing actions to increase the productivity of the territory, a decisive factor in the development of rural communities, through the conservation and rational use of land and the consequent protection of the environment... The adoption of soil conservation practices, with their economic implications for the producers, will depend on a strategy for the participation of the local communities in decision making and all phases of planning, using, protecting and strengthening productive resources... At the regional level, the project will formulate a methodology in four pilot zones for the sustainable cultivation and conservation of land.... In the four pilot zones, regional project staff will be responsible for conducting the phase for developing the appropriate methodology, and transferring to the producers the technology for the conservation and intensive cultivation of the land."

This meant that the project's success depended largely on the success of the work in the four pilot zones, which should certainly be selected after taking into account a complex series of factors. From these

pilot zones it was expected to obtain results that would demonstrate participation, solidarity and the adoption of improved soil conservation techniques, which could be put to good use in the future national plan. In fact, the use of the methodology in four pilot zones, with eight extension agencies (territorial government offices), twenty-four extension workers and two hundred small producers would have only limited impact; but the integration of the new methodology, tested in this way, into the whole national system of *extensión* would have a multiplying effect at the national level.

The choice of one of the four pilot zones was therefore the sensitive issue before the meeting Hans had called in the Province of Guanacaste, to be attended by the experts that had done the research and selection in the field.

"All good people," thought Hans. "I was lucky to be able to form a team like this - although it's not really a question of luck."

Indeed, luck had not come into it at all. The choice of the three FAO experts had been made in Rome and Hans had taken part in it. There had been a very careful selection process: first, the analysis of the qualifications and technical experience of the various candidates, then an exhaustive interview of a small group, to evaluate the attitude of each candidate towards team work, which would have to combine the approach and techniques of various sectors. The

choice had been made and Hans was satisfied with it. The three experts had arrived in Costa Rica two months ago and, after a first general phase of introduction to the project with Hans, they had had the opportunity to work directly in the field in the phase of research and selection of one of the four pilot zones.

"Today I shall find out if I have in the field three experts, a regional coordinator and three associates who have to gain experience, or a real team able to work well and in synergy with their Costa Rican counterparts," thought Hans.

This was a fundamental difference; he knew of projects that had been held up by the lack of cohesion among the experts in different sectors, which inevitably led to a futile struggle for the predominance of specific points of view. He had been very clear with the three experts on this point.

"The project will go well only if we can soon become a team and work together with this attitude," Hans had said to his three colleagues, before sending them to the Province of Guanacaste for research and selection of the pilot zone for that area.

He was sure that the three FAO experts were good. Carlos Cabrera, from Brazil, was a soil conservation expert; Francisco Urtega, from Uruguay, a community training expert; Pablo Casales, from Colombia, a social economist. Each of them had done extensive study in his field and had considerable experience in other projects and other countries.

Perhaps Carlo Cabrera had had one of the most interesting experiences: he had worked for a time at Paranà, in southern Brazil, where FAO had run a big project for fifteen years with excellent results.

Hans slowed down and then stopped with his engine running, to let two herdsmen and their cattle cross the road.

"This interior zone of Guanacaste is very good for animal husbandry," thought Hans. "The coastal part, the Nicoya peninsula, is quite different, and many of the farmers there have to tighten their belts. Today let's see what can be done for them."

He realized that he was now only a few kilometres from Liberia, the capital of the Guanacaste Province, and the provincial office of the Ministry of Agriculture, where the FAO coordinator for the region was based. Liberia, the only capital of the seven Costa Rican provinces to have its own name, instead of being called after the province itself, did not look like a town with a population of 33,000. In fact, many of the inhabitants lived in the surrounding areas and so that day, which was not market day, the town centre seemed quite empty, although it was almost half past nine in the morning.

He had come there on other occasions in the previous months, to supervise the area survey and appraisal phase. He had been personally involved in that part of the project, in checking the soil and climate conditions and studying crop quality and productivity losses. Now, after the more specific and

analytical research done by his colleagues, which had included a study of the socio-economic aspects of small communities, all the elements were available for the choice of a specific area for the implementation of the project and the development of a work model applicable to the whole peninsula of Nicoya.

He stopped at a big crossroads just outside the centre, turned left, passed the hotel where he was to stay the night and after a few minutes parked his jeep in front of the provincial branch of the Ministry of Agriculture. It was a small one-storey building with only a few rooms. Hans went to the office of the FAO regional coordinator, Ramon Fernandez, and opened the door. Ramon, who had not heard him come in, looked up from the documents he was reading, smiled and went to meet him, saying:

"Welcome, Hans. You're early as usual, although San José is not just round the corner!"

"Hello, Ramon, you're looking well," said Hans, "up to your eyes in paper as usual, though."

"Yes, the monthly report - it has to be done."

"And how's the work going?"

"Very well. Today we should be able to choose the area."

"That suits me fine," said Hans. "Let's sum up the situation, before the meeting."

They spent about three-quarters of an hour analysing the state of the project. Then Hans put his papers back in his brief-case. Ramon left the room and

came back a few minutes later with two glasses of orange juice.

"Here you are," he said, giving Hans a glass, "better have a drink now: it'll be a long hot day."

They went out and drove off in Hans' jeep to the Johancha area, where the three FAO experts, the Costa Rican technicians and three young Dutch associate trainees had been making a joint study of local conditions for some weeks. As Ramon had already told Hans, the two areas the experts found most interesting were San Isidro de Hojancho and Monte Roma. Accompanied by Ramon, Hans visited the two areas, stopping to talk with the experts there and making an early afternoon appointment with them. And as it looked as though they would not be able to eat until half past two or three, the group decided to meet for lunch at about that time in Johancha.

At the appointed time, arriving in little groups from various directions, three FAO experts of three different nationalities, six Costa Rican technicians and three young Dutch trainees met Hans and Ramon in the little local restaurant. Hans had three tables put together and they all sat down. They immediately ordered something to drink: the day was so hot they were far more thirsty than hungry. Each of them chose a dish from those their host said were on the menu, and while they were waiting sipped their drinks, chatted and joked together. Hans welcomed that care-free interval as a good sign, because experience had

taught him that it showed the degree of concentration and commitment put into the work.

After a while, when they had all been served, Hans introduced the subject of work.

"I can see you've been enjoying yourselves here in the last few weeks! I might even get transferred here myself. Or would it be too late?"

"It would, actually. The work of selecting the pilot zone is practically finished," replied Carlos Cabrera, the FAO soil conservation expert. "And we're ready to make our recommendation to you."

"Good," said Hans. "And which are the possible areas?"

"Two, mainly," said Carlos. "There are some differences between them, although they both have the same serious soil erosion problems."

"These differences are substantial, at least in my sector," remarked Francisco Urtega, the FAO community training expert.

"In mine too," said Pablo Casales, the FAO social economics expert.

"What kind of differences?" asked Hans.

"It seems to me that the specific socio-economic situation is a particularly limiting factor," said Pablo. "It's true that from a soil conservation point of view, both areas have characteristics and difficulties typical of the whole Nicoya peninsula, but from the socio-economic point of view San Isidro de Hojancho does not look very good. It is too sparsely populated, and most of the farmers have to work elsewhere to eke out

a living for their families. So apart from being frequently away, they would not have any spare funds to contribute to the development of their land."

"But active, constructive participation is one of the project's objectives," said Francisco.

"So you're saying that the San Isidro farmers would be too marginal a group to be included in this project?" asked Hans.

"I'm afraid so," Pablo replied.

"Then again, the lack of infrastructure in the area would hold up soil conservation, especially in the rainy season," said Carlos.

"For this group of farmers we should perhaps study a separate project, to which they would not have to contribute resources of their own," Pablo suggested.

"Yes", said Gerardo Barboza, one of the Costa Rican technicians, "it would be fine if we could work out something for them too."

"Could we come back to that in a minute?" asked Hans politely, steering the discussion back to the main point. "What about the other area?"

"From that point of view, the situation in Monte Roma is quite different," said Pablo. "The village is small, with about three hundred inhabitants, but conditions there are far better for a project. The land was distributed by the *Instituto de Desarrollo Agrario* to landless farmers, who have had the benefit of better natural conditions and some infrastructure that already exists."

"But in this area too there is a great need to improve cultivation methods and protect the soil from erosion," said Carlos.

"From my point of view the situation at Monte Roma is certainly much better," said Pablo. "I would also say that it is quite representative of the Nicoya peninsula: the farmers work full time on their farms and have some funds to put into the project. They can also take out loans and pay them back as the productivity of the land increases."

"There certainly are great soil problems," Carlos insisted, "and if we show how they can be solved at Monte Roma, we shall be able to motivate nearly all the farmers in the Nicoya peninsula, who have practically the same erosion problems."

"In Monte Roma things would also be better as regards community training," Francisco remarked. "The leaders of the two local cooperatives have shown interest in the project, and I think we would obtain valuable support from them."

"With them we should also tackle the problem of raising livestock in vulnerable areas," Carlos added. "If the herdsmen go on like this, in a few years' time they will have no more pasture, and no more land suitable for cultivation."

"There are other things to be done as well, to prevent the situation becoming worse," said Pablo. "It is very important to work out a crop diversification programme. Have you seen how the selling prices of coffee have dropped? They've got to introduce new

crops quickly; they can't make a living out of coffee alone, now that the prices have fallen so low!"

"Market gardening might be a good answer," replied Niels Solòrzano, from the Ministry of Agriculture's provincial office for land-use planning.

"It certainly would!" said Hans, noticing with appreciation that the members of the group who had not yet spoken were following the discussion carefully and were ready to chip in at the right moment. His past experience as a musician suggested a significant parallel: as in the execution of a composition, harmony can also be expressed by a group of technicians of different nationalities and types of experience, each intent on playing his part, and all united by the same note: the will to contribute, as a group, to the success of the project.

After a short pause, Hans looked intently at the group and asked:

"So you recommend that Monte Roma should be chosen as the pilot zone?"

Six or seven said yes; the others nodded.

"So how do you intend to proceed?" Hans asked the group.

"We must go back to Monte Roma and discuss a short-term work schedule with the farmers", said Ramon Fernandez. "We could give Jeroen Rijniers the task of working out this phase," Carlos Cabrera suggested, while the Dutch associate technician smiled in agreement. "The first farms to be included in the project have to be chosen, as well as the soil con-

servation measures most appropriate to the crops planned by the farmers."

"Agreed," said Hans, "and then?"

"We must have a meeting as soon as possible with the main agricultural cooperative to discuss the programme", said Francisco Urtega. "We must be able to reach the greatest possible number of farmers, so as to achieve the greatest impact in a short time."

"That's a good move!" said Hans. "When do you think the meeting can take place?"

"Let's see: tomorrow's Saturday; Jeroen will work on the programme for the whole of next week... We could have the meeting next Saturday, in nine days' time", replied Francisco.

"Fine. Let's do that," Hans replied. He liked the idea of the meeting. The group was working like a team.

"And what shall we do for San Isidro?" he asked with a smile.

"We could include it in the project with the aim of seeing how agricultural productivity can be improved without the use of special resources," Pablo Casales suggested.

"New soil and water conservation methods could do a lot in that area," said Carlos Cabrera.

"We could also introduce a rational use of fertilizers, which might be provided as a loan to the community, to be repaid in the form of work," said Gerardo Barboza who, having already given the farmers of San Isidro some idea of what was going on,

was very pleased to discuss the prospect of an additional intervention.

"Agreed", said Hans to the team. Then he called out to his host: "When's the coffee coming, boss?"

In the evening, Hans gave Ramon a lift to his office and then drove straight to the hotel. He went up to his room and, before having a shower, 'phoned home.

"Hi, Karin, it's me."

"Hello Hans! How was the trip? And did you have a good day?"

"Yes, really good. What's Elise doing?"

"She's here, finishing her homework. Would you like to speak to her?"

"Not now, Karin - I must have a shower. Just tell her that tomorrow afternoon we can go to the match together."

Before he put down the receiver, Hans heard Karin happily giving his message to Elise, and his daughter shouting "Hurray!"

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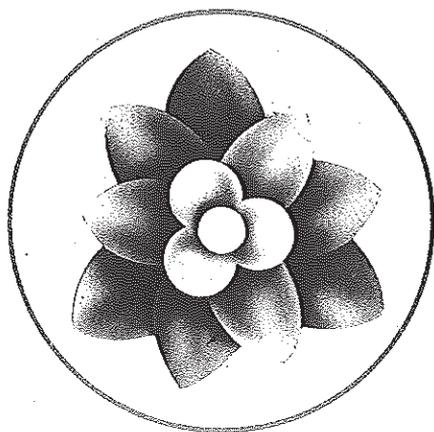
The five-year project discussed in this story is GCP/COS/012/NET and it is still ongoing.

Although the names of the FAO experts are different, all the characters are real. They are all working, with the joy of serving shining in their eyes, as I have seen with mine.





REFLECTIONS  
ON  
SEVEN KEYS TO INTERPRETATION



Everything is energy, as even secondary school children now know. To reflect on the Copernican revolution of consciousness which is happening on the planet and which most people are living through almost without noticing it, I propose, dear readers, to adopt a special method of analysis of the energy of life: a method which breaks it down into the qualities which it consists of and observes them one by one.

A ray of the sun's light, when it goes through a transparent prism, reveals that it is in reality composed of seven luminous rays of different frequencies: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet. They are the seven colours of the rainbow.

Likewise, when the vital energy which pervades our world is observed with an enquiring mind and consciousness, it reveals that it is in reality composed of seven different types of energy, each one of which determines and supports certain specific manifestations of life, from the world of ideas to that of objective reality.

To the psychologist, the phenomenon of the refraction of light and the study of the colours of which it is composed open up a vast field of research, in which the different "qualities" of the colours are seen as causes, or contributory causes, of different stimuli and states of consciousness.

To the philosopher, who is constantly pushing ahead in his research into the realm of first causes of reality, the seven qualities of which vital energy is in fact composed constitute a fascinating field of enquiry.

In it, the researcher proceeds from one level of awareness to another, in order to understand better and better those splendid and enthralling mysteries which have accompanied humanity from time immemorial.

Now let us come to ourselves. What I am about to do is to apply this method of research and study of causes to the socio-economic reality of which I speak in this book. And why not? Sociology and economics are expressions of human group life. They, too, are subject, like the people who are their component parts, to those basic principles of existence which can be clearly understood from the viewpoint of the seven qualities of life that determine them.

In brief: as for a beam of white light there exist seven fundamental colours of which it is made up and which are revealed by a transparent prism, in the same way there exist seven qualities of energy which are similarly keys to understanding the revolution of consciousness outlined in these pages. The aim is fascinating: to obtain the best understanding of the fundamental causes of this formidable expansion of consciousness, which is beginning, little by little, to bring humanity from the obscurity of a world dictated by egoism to the light of a planet in which social relationships spring from altruism and from the consequent new sense of responsibility.

Let us look at these seven keys together. To do this however the reader must, at least temporarily, get rid of that heavy burden consisting of the main type of

information which is given to us daily: violent, dramatically painful, distressing and horrible. I do not mean to say that ugly things do not exist; I am asserting, however, that there is an imbalance between that type of news and the other, which bears witness to the immense effort which is taking place on the planet to build a better world. If it were broadcast daily with the same emphasis as the other kind, the "good news" would create a balance, in the consciousness of the people, between involutory and evolutionary realities, and the new road on which humanity has at last begun to travel would be evident to everyone.

So I make this invitation to the reader who is about to read these reflections: let us be well aware of the marvellous reality of that silent army called "volunteers", which involves five million people in Italy who give a little or even all their time to others... And if in this country there are five million, how many are there in the world? A hundred million? Or perhaps more? This is the living proof that we are not talking of impracticable hopes, as many would like to maintain, denying the evidence of this new reality, which is an unquestionable indicator of the renewal of consciousness.

To sum up, then, let us half fill a glass with water and observe it: although we are well aware that it is half empty, let us feel encouraged by the awareness that it is half full. Then, the seven keys of interpretation, which must be kept in mind in order to understand the formidable revolution of conscious-

ness which is occurring all over the planet, will be able to withstand the shock of the ever-present pessimists and sceptics, from whom one must learn to protect oneself, especially when they call themselves "realists".

### **The first key: the will to serve**

It cannot be denied, even the blind could see it: a revolution of consciousness is taking place and humanity is on the point of taking on new and important responsibilities.

Humanity, for the entire span of its written history and that passed down by word of mouth, experienced up to 1945 A.D., that is up to less than two generations ago, a course of events determined in the last analysis by a single law, the law of the strongest.

Huge empires have arisen and fallen through the working of this law, which can well be indicated as the principal involutory law, in so far as it has made possible the prevalence of egoism and oppression, and has suffocated for the most part the evolutionary drive signalled by the initial signs of altruism and generosity.

At the same time, however, through the ages humanity has always had, in every culture and in every civilization, some small (numerically speaking) groups of men who have kept burning the torch of the

basic energy of this solar system: Love, which is wisdom and is fully expressed by Sacrifice.

One of the most beautiful words of Latin origin which we have and which we so often use with a strong colouring of renunciation and grief, is in fact: sacrifice. It is the synthesis of two Latin words, *sacrum facere*, to make sacred. The term "sacrifice" thus assumes a much deeper meaning and a greater force.

To understand and to live sacrifice from this viewpoint, which will show itself to be a real source of joy and inner satisfaction, man must raise himself above the desires of the personality and respond to the influence of his Higher Self. By its very nature, our Higher Self is not separative, but all-comprehending; it is not egocentric, but altruistic; it does not impose and oppress, but suggests lovingly. Moreover, the call of the Higher Self cannot be eluded without serious disturbances of the personality and, in extreme cases, its very destruction.

As for the individual, so for humanity as a whole, the first perception of the voice of the Higher Self marks the beginning of a profound and substantial change. For fifty years, less than two generations, this change has been spreading more and more widely among those millions of individuals who are readiest and is already producing a wonderful flowering in society. The United Nations and the thousands of non-governmental organizations, in spite of their present defects and incompleteness, represent the

greatest evidence of this change which is taking place in the consciousness of humanity.

Sacrifice (*sacrum facere*) is in turn the product, or rather the evidence of a fundamental act in the life of a man, or a noble expression of it in society. This fundamental act is the act of will. After having expressed will through acts which have influenced his personal life above all, at a certain point of his evolution man has begun to hear, collectively, the call of his Higher Self and has begun to respond collectively to that call by beginning to carry out acts of will which have aims diametrically opposite to those demanded until that moment by his lower self, his personality. Thus the planetary social conscience is born and the act of will begins to express contents and values of brotherly love and solidarity. It is the revolution of consciousness.

For the information of the reader who is a *realist*: I am talking of an inversion in tendency which is still at the beginning and which will only be able to express itself fully in the time span of several generations. And is this a time which is *really* too long for an expansion of consciousness of such revolutionary and vast significance?

### **The second key: loving solidarity**

The will to serve, when it is the expression of the soul impulse and is translated into social com-

mitment, produces a loving attitude which goes beyond the charitable expressions suggested by the emotional sphere. It is a loving attitude which springs out of the right understanding of the ideal of brotherhood, of unity in diversity, of responsibility of the person with greater knowledge. Loving solidarity originates in this way, superseding the sense of social duty towards the needy and expanding into the realm of the joy of sacrifice, that is, of rendering sacred the relationship of man with his fellow creatures, of whatever race, creed or condition they are.

This new attitude increasingly constitutes the psychological field which receives the new impulses of the will, nurtures them and makes them its own, heightening their revolutionary potential in the consciousness, which is stretched like a bow towards the achievement of new aims.

We have sensational evidence of how this new attitude has begun to constitute the fertile terrain in which the new impulses of an aware and responsible conception of society are nurtured. (At the same time the opposite conditions, which are produced by the old attitude, closed to new values, are just as evident).

The new attitude springs from the growing sense of brotherhood and so of acceptance of unity in diversity. It has already banned, in the collective consciousness of the advanced part of humanity, the colonial policies of the recent past and the macroscopic social injustices of the industrial revolution. Increasingly it forms the ideal ground for receiving and

nurturing new concepts. These concern, for example, the responsibility of those who possess and know more; the unacceptability of the serious socioeconomic imbalances caused by the enormous concentration of wealth in a very small part of society; the optimum and shared use of natural resources in a planet which is now interdependent; and the mobilization of public opinion motivated by a growing sense of loving social responsibility.

To deny this formidable expansion of consciousness which is taking place in widening strata of world population means not remembering the attitude of peoples and governments which was prevalent up to fifty years ago, an attitude which considered violent conquest and exploitation legitimate. In short, the evidence cannot be denied: until less than two generations ago, many developed countries used to fill the holds of their ships with arms and soldiers bent on war; today more and more often they fill them with humanitarian aid, and the governments, urged on by a public opinion which is more and more responsible, allocate a part of their gross internal product for the support of the developing countries.

At the same time it cannot be ignored that the old attitude, determined by egoism and separateness, is still restricted by old points of view and absurd ways of thinking, which prevent the expansion of the new. The individuals and social groups who interpret life in terms of force and oppression, or have the outlook of defending old values, habits and customs to the

bitter end, are still very many. The most sensational example of this old attitude, an example which includes both the view regarding force and the mental rejection of any new form, is constituted by religious fundamentalism. This determines individual and collective behaviour which greatly hinder the change for the new. But even here it is only a question of time: life is in constant evolution and in the long term it does not tolerate obstacles to its full expression. And so today we are witnesses of a growing collective attitude of condemnation of religious fundamentalism, which will perhaps be the last separative attitude to fall, but fall it will.

### **The third key: the general plan**

In the formulation of a general plan and trends for the development of humanity, the higher aspect of the mind, that highest and noblest part which comes into contact with the world of ideas and ideals, enters into play. With different degrees of colouring and substance, ideals are renewed, enriched in content and expressed in new orientations which have their origin in a revolutionary act of will, received and sustained by a new consciousness.

In their turn, these new orientations determine both individual choices which are in harmony with the plan of evolution and admirable and far-sighted social structures. Charity becomes solidarity. Care for

the good of others springs from a consciousness of the substantial unity of all peoples, which compels those with greater awareness to think of new ways to express loving solidarity. This allows humanity today to begin to express solidarity in those elaborate and complex forms which social life demands today.

Thus the ideal of brotherhood is enriched by the power of social responsibility. The eternal enemies of humanity, which are the direct consequence of the old egoistic and separative attitude, are under attack from the viewpoint of a profoundly renewed consciousness. And so hunger, illness and ignorance are no longer incurable scourges: their causes are analysed and the broad lines of a strategy are drawn up for defeating them one day. The part of humanity which has the greatest degree of awareness is mobilized and conceives, gives form to, and expresses the great lines of energy which have a single, great, common objective: the renewal of humanity at a new level of consciousness. These trends, in their turn, give rise to new awareness and the identification of new, specific, far-reaching objectives, which are brought into manifestation as we shall see later on, when we speak about the fifth key of interpretation.

#### **The fourth key: balance between giving and receiving**

In order to become rooted in the renewed consciousness of humanity and find adequate forms of

expression, loving solidarity must be able to reflect a substantial balance between the world of ideas, from which it springs, and the material world in which it has to be expressed. In other words, the Higher Self of humanity must be able to instil in humanity's personality such a yearning for the attainment of the idea of brotherhood that the responsibility for giving is felt with an intensity equal to the responsible request to receive.

This is not a game of words. The attentive reader will have already understood that this balance is essential for the real expression of the relationship between giving and receiving. It is a balance which is difficult to achieve because it requires the awareness of the three keys which precede it and the three which manifest it, which we will see later. It is also a balance which cannot be reached by an intellectual decision; in other words, one cannot say: "Now I want to reflect in the world, in an impersonal and therefore balanced way, the will to help, loving solidarity, and a general plan." What must be done, and is done now by many, with or without awareness, is to understand with the heart those three fundamental keys, so as to make them become part of ourselves and of the social organizations which we create to put them into practice.

This is the real task of this fourth key: to reflect the understanding of the heart, which is intuitive and thus synthetic and immediate, in the realm of the rational mind (individual and collective). The latter is

analytical and structured and will give form to realities which will be close to the three fundamental keys, in so far as the reflecting role of the fourth is complete.

I know that this key is not easy to understand fully; but precisely because of its reflecting nature (like the cave of Plato, which reflected on its walls the world of ideas), its role will become clearer with the understanding of the three keys which follow and whose manifestation it renders possible in a subtle and secret way.

It is from the point of view of this fourth key to interpretation that it is possible to see clearly the two new attitudes which are spreading in humanity: those of knowing how to give and how to receive. And it is the reflecting power of this key which will one day bring to full expression the concept of "giving" and that of "receiving". The revolution of consciousness now occurring will then be fulfilled, in which these two attitudes which humanity is beginning to express will be taken to their maximum evolution. Thus the person who gives will be grateful to the one who receives for the opportunity he has had to give; and the person who receives will be grateful to the one who gives for the opportunity he has had to demonstrate his sense of responsibility. All this, naturally, will take place in the context of a better conception of brotherhood, which humanity is already able to express today and will be able to express more fully in a not too distant future: the full awareness of the unity of the human family, in spite of its diversity.

Does it seem like a dream? It is not! Let us remember that the glass is already half full.

### **The fifth key: programmes of action**

From the point of view of this fifth key to interpretation, the revolution of consciousness enters into the concrete world and produces, in the various fields of human activity, new levels of awareness based on attentive analyses of situations and their tendencies.

In these last two generations, or even less, humanity has expressed with facts some tangible fixed points which are the pillars on which a new planetary order is being laboriously constructed. (I seem to hear my *realistic* reader exclaim: "Facts: about time!" However he should ask himself, at this point, whether the tangible facts which we are about to look at together would have been possible without the decisive presence of the four "keys to interpretation" presented previously).

So then, facts. In consciousness, however, facts take the name of levels of awareness, which in their turn determine other facts in objective reality... of more tangible significance (to speak in the words of the *realistic* reader). Let us examine some of these levels of awareness, which have already given a formidable acceleration to our way of thinking and therefore of acting. Let us begin precisely from that

period which I have referred to several times: less than two generations ago ...

The first tangible expression of these new ideas arose through the work of a great President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt, when the horrors of the second world war were still not finished. After a period of frenzied preparation, on 25th April 1945 the representatives of fifty nations met in San Francisco to draw up the Charter of an international organization to maintain peace and security in the world.

With that preparatory work, willed with far-sightedness, and with the consequent foundation of the Organization of the United Nations, a turning point was reached in human history. For the first time (apart from the too brief and embryonic phase of the League of Nations), powerful governments and nations which were still very young met to start an era of international relations in order to build peace and security, respect for the rights of man and solutions to international problems of an economic, social, cultural and humanitarian nature.

I hear that the tone of voice of the *realistic* reader rises at this point to express his full protest: "Ah, yes?" he says, "and what are we to think of the failure of the United Nations missions to Somalia and Bosnia, to speak of the most sensational ones?" Well, the reply comes directly from the keys to interpretation which we have considered up to now. We complain about the lack of incisiveness and authority with which the

United Nations have dealt with problems like these, but we do not want to consider even for a moment that the United Nations can only express the degree of authority which has been delegated to them by the member states. The latter, because of the old egocentric and separative attitude which still characterizes many of their attitudes and ways of behaviour, have taken care not to sanction precise limitations of their national sovereignty and to specify for what problems and at what levels the United Nations have the right or duty to assume and express a supra-national authority.

Besides this, the difficult and at times insuperable obstacle constituted by the "right of veto" in the Security Council of the United Nations should certainly not be underestimated. This obstacle has influenced innumerable crucial decisions, imposing political compromises instead of solutions for the common good. With the result that too often, above all in the difficult and long period of the cold war, the Security Council has forced immobility on a structure which had been established to evaluate, decide, settle, affirm and sanction.

What is to be done? Let us return to our first key to interpretation, the will to serve, and, in the name of the common good and a new planetary social consciousness, let us strengthen its bases and render it strong enough to overcome the national strongholds of the old egoistic and separative attitude. Then loving solidarity, the second key, will receive the impulse and nourish the aim, and the general plan, the third

key, will provide the trends. Only thus can the fourth key reflect its ideals in the tangible world of human relations, and the programmes of action, the fifth key, formulate their realization in the various fields of activity. There is no other way. And the sooner we realize it, the sooner we shall begin, as an aware public opinion, to press our governments to express that delegation of supra-national authority which is the loving renunciation of the single country for the common good of humanity.

Between the nineteen-fifties and nineteen-seventies, the United Nations grew as an organization of knowledge and purpose, giving life to an entire family of Specialized Agencies on the most important aspects of life, which arose to meet the needs and perspectives of an incredible group of different cultures, traditions and languages. Today, through the United Nations, there is not a single sector for which there is no international cooperation, for which we do not have a planetary data bank and for which we have not discovered the principal trends and outlined the major corrective action which we should carry out collectively, as a single family, the human one, on a unique planet, Earth. For the first time in history, the peoples of the Earth know each other, count each other, foresee the lines of demographic development, the standards of living and the state of health and education, and define human rights and do their best to defend them; not to mention the sciences, whose scope extends from astrophysics to our planetary

system, the biosphere, the oceans, and the flora and fauna of the planet. This is a formidable step forward, a situation which simply did not exist in 1945.

At the end of the nineteen-seventies, another splendid, innovative expression of human thought was the North-South Commission, set up and guided by Willy Brandt, which presented to the world its analyses and proposals for improving the relations between the industrialized and the developing countries. With its revolutionary thinking on the subject of mutual interests between peoples, the Brandt Report had a very powerful impact on public opinion. In that report, the Brandt Commission wrote that the reformulation of the relations between the North and South of the world was the biggest social challenge of humanity for the rest of the century. The report concluded thus:

"While hunger governs, peace cannot prevail. He who wants to banish war, must also banish hunger. Morally, there is no difference if a human being is killed in war or condemned to die of hunger because of the indifference of others."

The Brandt Commission also indicated a "magic" number to the world: 0.7%. Yes, the attentive and severe study of that Commission indicated to the conscience of peoples and their governments that the worst enemies of man, hunger, illness and ignorance, could be defeated simply by earmarking 0.7% of the annual gross domestic product of the industrialized countries *forthat* war. I have purposely used the

adverb "simply" because it is on this point that I want to invite my readers to reflect. It is true that less than 1% of yearly national wealth should not represent an impossible commitment for any country, and so the exclamations of disappointment and discouragement of those who have followed me until now could at first sight appear justified. However, it is still truer, if one can use the expression, that this small number represents, or would represent, the evidence of a revolutionary change in the social conscience of the industrialized countries. In fact, only two generations ago many of these same countries had, some more and some less, a colonial policy based mainly on force and exploitation!

The world had outbursts of enthusiasm and coldness about this report, but these revolutionary concepts began to be absorbed into consciousness and today, all things considered, we are on the right track. The most recent official statistics are those for 1993. This is the picture: four countries allocated even more than 0.7% of their GDP for cooperation in development (in this order: Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Holland); six others exceeded half (0.35%) of this magic number (France, Finland, Canada, Belgium, Germany and Australia); and eleven countries allocated less than half (Switzerland, Luxembourg, Italy, United Kingdom, Austria, Portugal, Japan, New Zealand, Spain, Ireland and the United States). Moreover, another fact which is very, very interesting is that the international classification of the donor countries is

beginning to have the power to stimulate generosity in those countries which still give too little in comparison with their capacities.

Let us make a last reflection on this subject. In 1993 the average allocation for Official Development Assistance of the 21 countries of the Development Assistance Commission (those listed above) was 0.30% of their GDP, amounting to 56 billion dollars. Perhaps to some people this will seem a huge sum. But, to put it in perspective, it is enough to say that the money which the world spends on arms in a single year amounts to about a thousand billion dollars. I do not mean that the armed forces are not still necessary today, unfortunately; I only want to hint at the quality of life which humanity will one day be able to enjoy, when it will have finally received and put into practice the principles of responsibility, sharing and loving solidarity. It is worth fighting for Peace, isn't it?

Let us not forget, in fact, that this fifth key - the programmes of action - brings us directly and quickly from new awareness to new and tangible achievements. This revolution in consciousness has already led to many programmes and results of world-wide importance such as, for example, the elimination of smallpox, an illness which even in 1967 affected fifteen million people, and the immunization of children, which today saves ten thousand young lives a day.

In 1980, the Prime Minister in office of Sweden founded the Independent Commission on the Pro-

blems of Disarmament and Security. In a world which was profoundly divided into two strongly antagonistic blocks, the analysis of this commission constituted one of the fundamental motives for the interruption of the proliferation of nuclear arms, because it indicated the tremendous costs in clear terms and spread the awareness that a nuclear holocaust cannot have any winners. Olaf Palme wrote in that report:

"There cannot be any hope of victory in a nuclear war: the two opponents would be united in suffering and destruction. They can only survive together. They must attain safety not against the adversary, but together with him. International safety must be founded on the commitment for survival, rather than on the threat of a reciprocal destruction."

This is perhaps one of the best examples of how, once they have been absorbed by the collective consciousness, even if they are of revolutionary significance, the new levels of awareness undergo a formidable acceleration, producing new tangible situations which change our way of thinking and acting. How many of us saw with anguish the film "The Day After"? Not much time passed in this case!

In 1987 (only eight years ago, but in terms of awareness it seems like a century), the United Nations set up the World Commission on Environment and Development. The Commission, chaired by the Norwegian Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland, presented its report that same year, "Our Common Future". In it, the Brundtland Commission pointed

out that the existing lines of development could not be allowed to continue in their present direction, because humanity was risking disaster in various fields, such as the ecological, demographic and socio-economic fields. In the same document, however, the Commission underlined also that the necessary changes were possible and that humanity had never before had greater possibilities of getting clear of the negative tendencies of the past. To make changes, political reforms were necessary, as well as the availability of know-how and resources, and a fairer distribution of these between and within countries.

The central concept of the report of the Brundtland Commission is the extremely significant one of "sustainable development". And from that moment, this new awareness has led to tangible changes of immense significance. We have only to think of the international agreements on the limitation of the emission of chlorofluorocarbons to limit damage to the ozone layer; or of the development of the international movement of the Greens, which has influenced the environmental policies of the western countries and the programmes of political parties of an older tradition.

In the wake of the new concept of "sustainable development", another event which can justly qualify for consideration as a pillar in the formation of a new level of consciousness is represented by the South Commission, set up in 1990, consisting mainly of developing countries and chaired by Julius Nyerere,

formerly President of Tanzania. This commission has had an amazing result: that of registering in consciousness not only the responsibility of the donor countries, but also, and in a certain sense particularly, that of the very countries which receive development aid, which must learn to take their own destiny in hand with a greater sense of responsibility. The last paragraph of the report of the South Commission says:

"In the last analysis, the demand of the South for justice, equity and democracy in global society cannot be separated from the search for these objectives in its own societies. The commitment to democratic values, the respect for fundamental rights, particularly for the right to dissent, a fair treatment for minorities, concern for the poor and the unfortunate, the willingness to settle disputes without recourse to war: all this cannot but influence public opinion and increase the probability that the South will ensure a new world order."

In this context, the problem of substantially improving the possibility for women to participate in the social transformations which are so necessary in so many parts of the world, has gained ever-increasing importance. In many countries, it is the women who take on the greatest burden of existence; improving the quality of their life is not only a just response to a deserving need, but is also a very promising way towards the development of better directed solutions to specific problems of everyday life. These problems concern essential fields like the education of children,

hygiene, home economics in the context of subsistence economies, and the development of professional and entrepreneurial capacities for women heads of households, just to mention a few.

After four World Conferences of the United Nations on Women, the time is becoming ripe for several fundamental decisions which, once taken, will influence significantly and positively the programmes of sustainable development in many countries. The ground already covered in the right direction is quite clear, if we remember what the social position and role of women were just a single generation ago, even in western countries with an advanced economy. In many parts of the world we are certainly still far from conditions which will allow women to participate fully in the development of social life, but that future role has now been outlined and acknowledged by the collective consciousness as the goal to aim for with increasing vigour.

Formulated by a new level of consciousness which accepts the increasing awareness of unity and interdependence of humanity, the programmes of action of this fifth key to interpretation have some of their major pillars in these pronouncements and these achievements, which mark out a luminous road for the future. Utopias? Not at all. These events, and others which I have not reported here, have already produced thirty-two Specialized Agencies of the United Nations, tens of thousands of non-governmental organizations and innumerable local volun-

tary groups. It is a silent army of millions of people, it is the diamond point of a new planetary consciousness. Apart from sporadic exceptions, it does not appear in the headlines of newspapers or on television, but it is mobilized every day for new battles in a war for those new values which, once they are affirmed, will allow humanity to realize a wonderful dream: the dream of making peace blossom.

### **The sixth key: for world ethics**

Every army has its flags, its symbols, its victories and its songs of glory, which until now have always had the classic reverse of the coin: if on the one hand they have sung of the deeds, the conquests and the glory of their own ranks, on the other they have always had to remember the defeats and sufferings of the conquered.

In the revolution of consciousness of which we have spoken, a wonderful thing occurs: for the first time in human history, in this war no losers are foreseen but only winners. This is an exciting fact in itself. The abandonment of the old tendencies based on egoism is certainly difficult and long (if we measure the time on our everyday calendar), but the change in direction by a hundred and eighty degrees to embrace the prospect which results from altruism and solidarity, even if it is laborious and slow (but are three or four generations really too long?) will pro-

duce precisely this amazing result: there will be no losers but only winners.

The victory, although still far off, is already taking shape. There appears in consciousness today the need for, and at the same time the initial evidence of a new and global system of ethics. Humanity is searching, in many fields, for very important specific replies to controversial ethical questions (whose concerns range from the ethics of genetic engineering to those of mass communication, from the ethics of responsible procreation to those of the defence of life in extreme circumstances, and also cover economic and political ethics). But it appears increasingly evident that it must give birth to a fundamental global system of ethics, which would constitute the frame of reference for particular and specific ethical problems.

The response to this primary moral requirement for global order naturally arises from the new concept of brotherhood which many advanced consciences have already begun to make their own: the concept of *unity in diversity*. From this revolutionary concept, simple to state but difficult for many to assimilate, it will certainly be possible to deduce the right response to those questions which humanity is asking itself; and concepts like tasks, duties and responsibilities will take on a spiritual dimension and a new meaning in the noble battle of consciousness to build a new era of peace.

As I was saying, every army has its own victories. Even this marvellous silent army has its own. They

are the expression of new ideals and they are attained over the strongholds of consciousness, which are conquered by the force of an inexorable impulse: sacrifice. These expansions of consciousness, which are in effect defining a new ethics, the ethics of a global and interdependent society, can be great and sensational, or small and unknown, but they are all significant stages for the new humanity which is being formed before our very eyes. They certainly cannot hide the evidence from us, provided that we know how to keep our eyes well open to see and understand what is already happening. Here are some examples. I will deliberately use the present perfect tense even for those events which should normally be described in the past definite; but my readers now know that the revolution of consciousness is achieved with different timing: in that subtle and impalpable, yet so decisive field fifteen years are not many.

In 1980, with a resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations, the Peace University was set up. Article 2 of the statute states the aims and purposes of the University thus:

"The University is established with a clear determination to provide humanity with an international institution of higher education for peace, and with the aim of promoting among all human beings the spirit of understanding, tolerance and peaceful coexistence, to stimulate co-operation among peoples and to help lessen obstacles and threats to world peace and progress, in keeping with the noble aspirations pro-

claimed in the Charter of the United Nations. To this end, the University shall contribute to the great universal task of educating for peace by engaging in teaching, research, post-graduate training and dissemination of knowledge, fundamental to the full development of the human person and societies through the interdisciplinary study of all matters relating to peace."

Paraphrasing the motto (still very widespread) of the ancient Romans, who used to exhort people to prepare themselves for war in order to maintain peace (with force and fear, even if today words like "deterrent" and "dissuasion" are used), the motto of the University, which has its headquarters in Costa Rica, is: "*Si vis pacem, para pacem*" (if you want peace, prepare for peace). In its simplicity it is really revolutionary, isn't it?

In 1986, in Assisi, an extraordinary event occurred: the heads of all the world religions met for a period of some days of prayer together. The hours of those days were marked by different rites and functions in which everyone participated. If we think of the innumerable religious wars that humanity has lived through in the course of the centuries, this event cannot fail to amaze us and at the same time fill us with enthusiasm. Think of this: from the same place in which, seven centuries ago, St. Francis sent out to the world the message of brotherhood, the note has sounded of the substantial unity of different religions,

which have originated for different peoples at different periods.

(I have been very struck by these two events, which in my opinion constitute two splendid steps forward towards a new era in which the concept of brotherhood animates a new system of ethics and prescribes for programmes designed to prepare consciences to work in synergy with the development of the planet. So I have proposed to the Peace University and the Sacred Convent of St. Francis of Assisi to agree to a "twinning of a brotherhood of intent" between them on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. Both the Rector of the University and Father Custodian of the Sacred Convent have declared their agreement and have accepted a draft document in which the two organizations recognize that they are animated by the same viewpoint of brotherhood between men and peoples, an indispensable prologue to the building of peace in the world. They also declare that they wish to engage in a synergetic effort to make the sense of responsibility and conscious gratitude blossom between peoples engaged in programmes of cooperation and development. The agreement will be signed in Assisi in November this year and the study of programmes of action will begin immediately afterwards.)

In 1993, in Chicago, in the wake of the dialogue proposed and realized in Assisi, the representatives of all the world religions met: Catholics and Protestants, Muslims and Jews, Orthodox Christians and

Buddhists, Hindus and Jains. This Parliament of the world religions concluded in this way its work on the study of a world ethics:

"To conclude, we appeal to all the inhabitants of this planet: our earth cannot be changed for the better without a change in the consciousness of the individual. We wish for a change in the individual and collective consciousness, an awakening of our spiritual forces through reflection, meditation, prayer and positive thought, a conversion of hearts. United we can move mountains. Without risk and willingness for sacrifice, no fundamental changes will be made in our situation. We therefore support a common world ethos, involving a better mutual understanding as well as forms of life which are socially adequate, promote peace and are in harmony with nature. We invite all men, religious or not, to do the same."

It is a splendid proof, I think, of the vital force of the new emerging concept of *unity in diversity*.

Even spirituality itself, particularly in the western world, is undergoing a remarkable transformation. Hedonistic ethics is unfortunately widely diffused in western societies, as a direct consequence of a philosophical culture orientated for a long time mostly towards metaphysical scepticism and the denial of the transcendent. We can say, however that the bottom has been reached: the many aberrations resulting from an exasperated consumerism and the tremendous damage produced by seventy years of historical materialism are signs which indicate that from here

one can and must only rise upwards. In fact, corresponding to religions in difficulty because of a crisis of vocations and less frequented temples, there is an introspective tendency and a desire for participation, which represent the beginning of an inversion in tendency in wider and wider social strata. For many millions of people this inversion in tendency has already begun.

A "tangible" proof of the spiritual force which is at the basis of the concept of unity in diversity consists of a room which is at the headquarters of the United Nations in New York. It is a small room, but architecturally beautiful, symbolic and internally powerful, and it is frequented by representatives of almost all the faiths existing on earth. These are the words with which Dag Hammarskjöld, ex-Secretary General of the United Nations, described this meditation room:

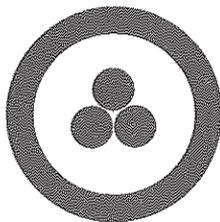
"This place, dedicated to work and debate in the service of peace, must have a room dedicated to external silence and inner quietness... a place where the doors can open on the infinite spaces of silence and prayer."

All these are certainly salient aspects of the peaceful revolution which is a sign of the renewal of social ethics for a new age. Let us not forget, however, that this renewal is well represented also by the tens of thousands of other episodes which bear witness to the silent work, based on sacrifice (*sacrum facere*), which is carried out daily by a great army of men and women transformed by the joy of knowing how to give and

how to receive, people whom it is not rhetorical to define as "the heroes of the new age". They manifest, each one according to his own level of evolution and all to the best of their possibilities, the characteristics of the new social ethics, solidarity, sharing, participation and sense of responsibility.

And the banner? Truth to tell, this Copernican revolution of consciousness might already have one. It is a banner which has already gone a long way in the name of peace. It is the work of the painter and writer Nicholas Roerich, who made it known and had it recognized by many governmental and non-governmental institutions in the nineteen-thirties. In 1954, at the Inter-governmental Conference which took place in The Hague, a concluding act was drawn up for the defence of places and buildings of cultural interest in the event of armed conflicts. This act was then ratified in Paris in 1955 by the thirty-nine states which had signed it at the Conference, and the Banner of Peace constituted its chosen symbol.

The Banner of Peace has the following design:



Three red balls on a white background, enclosed in a red circle: this symbol is interpreted by some people as an emblem of the past, the present and the future within the ring of eternity; by others, as a symbol of religion, science and art held together within the circle of culture. And in this context I can see a very beautiful, third interpretation: the world of the Will to serve, of supporting Love and intellectual Light, which together determine the circle of social manifestation on our planet.

In whatever way this symbol speaks to you, I know that it will suggest to you noble thoughts and vast horizons for the future. Yes, the future, because, if we think carefully, it is for the future that you and I are fighting, aren't we? This is how Nicholas Roerich spoke of the future:

"Real Peace, Real Unity is desired by the human heart. It strives to labour creatively and actively. For its labour is a source of joy. It wants to love and expand in the realization of Sublime Beauty. In the highest perception of Beauty and Knowledge all conventional divisions disappear. The heart speaks its own language; it wants to rejoice at that which is common for all, uplifts all, and leads to the radiant Future. All symbols and tablets of humanity contain one hieroglyph, the sacred prayer - Peace and Unity."

I like very much to think that the army of the heroes of the new age already has its banner: the Banner of Peace.

### The seventh key: rhythm and resonance

Before going into this seventh quality of energy, seen in the socio-economic perspective of these reflections, let us review the situation, remembering that we are talking of a revolution in social consciousness. So let us summarize:

the first quality, *the will to serve*, produces the impulse for the revolution in consciousness;

the second quality, *loving solidarity*, receives the impulse and nourishes it with that spirit of brotherhood which springs from the awareness of one humanity on one planet;

the third quality consists of the fusion of the first two and expresses itself with the formulation of a *general plan* for developing solidarity in forms articulated according to new trends: thus the ideal of brotherhood is enriched with the power of social responsibility;

the fourth quality expresses *the balance between giving and receiving* and reflects the new world of the three superior qualities in the world of concrete manifestation (*con creta*, tangible) of the other three;

the fifth quality stimulates the formulation of *programmes of action*, which arise from the new awareness and which are manifested tangibly in new social forms and in new economic realities which are distinct and detailed;

the sixth quality, which *works for a world system of ethics*, exalts the new ethics of a society which is now global and interdependent, in which solidarity, sharing, participation and responsibility must finally reign.

The time has come to speak of the seventh quality. After the summary I have just made, I think my readers have already realized that this quality cannot and need not bring new elements to the general design, which already has in it all the qualities and elements for its appearance.

One aspect, however, is still missing. It is as if there were a splendid score and a great orchestra ready to play it, but the director has not yet picked up his baton. In fact, this is the case. One quality is still lacking in the design to be manifested: that of a ceremonial which marks the time with rhythmic order and sends out the notes skilfully in order to achieve the best resonance in space. Isn't this the way a concerto is performed?

So the seventh quality has a double function: conferring order and rhythm on the great social design, and making the echo resound so as to reach and motivate those consciences which are not participating in this revolution.

The rhythm of this stupendous concerto is really already marked by those new manifestations which differentiate the years and the decades in which the world-wide work of development is significantly

subdivided. We have had special United Nations years for the Child, Women, Peace, Tolerance, and so on; and decades representing distinct aims. Some other very significant celebrations are being added to these official ones. Like the March for Peace, which expresses humanity's demand for peace with an annual march from Perugia to Assisi, in which tens of thousands of people participate, including this year the representatives of the first Assembly of the Peoples of the United Nations. And like this Assembly, held in October 1995, which drew to Perugia a hundred representatives of many peoples in grave and sometimes appalling difficulties. These peoples have little or no voice in the official international meetings, but they really incarnate the subject of the UN Charter: "We, peoples of the United Nations...". I was present at this first assembly, which will be held every year, and I can bear witness to the fact that it constituted a splendid proof of the concept of brotherhood expressed today on an interdependent planet: unity in diversity.

This marking of time with a ceremonial which aims to alternate the emphasis on the various aspects of the sustainable development of the planet is contributing significantly to the concentration of the efforts of the "insiders", but is still not contributing adequately to the formation of an aware and motivated public opinion.

We should not be too surprised by this. With few exceptions, the information which we receive every day from the press and television speaks mostly of

other events, those which in journalistic slang are defined as subjects which "draw" or "are news-worthy". They are subjects which are based on people's worst qualities: egoism, hatred, separativity. These negative qualities produce, unfortunately still on a wide scale, terrible events like wars, murders, struggles for the control of drugs and prostitution, widespread corruption at all levels, bullying and violence of every kind, and so on; and this trail of violence and blood unflinchingly obtains the most space every day in all the newspapers and television programmes. I already hear the voice of the *realistic* reader: "But this is the reality of the world we live in!" Of course, I don't deny this statement, because there is some truth in it. It is not *completely* true, however. Let us see why.

The reality in which we live does not consist only of that part of humanity which causes those terrible situations that occur every day. There are also many people who live in peace and do their duty, who perform their family and professional tasks every day with respect for others, and who even sacrifice themselves for others. Lastly, there are many who establish, as we have seen, a silent army which brings to voluntary service some very different qualities such as altruism, solidarity, sharing and responsibility. And these give rise continually to events which could well be the basis for a daily flow of news which would be positive, encouraging and certainly... contagious for all those consciences that are to some extent attentive to those new values for which an already substantial part

of humanity lives today. The media, however, say nothing of all this, or very little.

This observation bring us to a second statement. Is it really true that people *ask for* bad news? Or is it not rather true that people are easily shaken by it? This, which might seem at first sight like a distinction which is pretty marginal, not only is not so but also points to the tremendous responsibility which weighs on the world of information and which all the people belonging to that world avoid.

In fact, it is an irrefutable fact that people are shaken by all the terrible news items which are prepared for them every day; while it has still to be proved (and, I think, with little chance of success) that people *want* this type of news. And if people, or a good part of them, are shaken by bad news but do not want it, the consequence is that the world of information has a tremendous burden of guilt for deliberately choosing the most upsetting news. This is done not, or not only, to satisfy the daily request of the people but perhaps above all to work on the worst characteristics of part of the public, with the aim of keeping up sales in the name of free competition in a free market.

This is a terrifying responsibility. It is as if schools began to give out tickets for pornoshops instead of homework, or hospitals decided to do only appendicitis operations because they are the ones which are most profitable.

"But these,"(it is the voice of the *realistic* reader talking) "are public services; while information, especially the press, is mainly of a private nature."

Now I shall speak without reserve. I deliberately chose the examples which I cited as a paradox: both the school and hospital services have the power to make a direct impression on the psyche and the very lives of people. The same can certainly be said of the world of information, to which at this point I can legitimately add that of a certain part of the performing arts. These two worlds also have the power, a tremendous power, to influence the minds of citizens and, through the mind, their social behaviour. Does it make sense then to continue to make a distinction between public and private in the context of a so-called free market? Or should we not rather recognize and determine the great responsibility that these two sectors, information and the performing arts, have on people, particularly the young?

It seems to me that any responsible person can have no doubts about the reply. It is necessary, urgently necessary that a new ethical code sets out this heavy responsibility. It is necessary that the well-prepared public (you, my friends and readers) makes its voice heard in order to ask for and encourage information and performances which are different and positive and reveal a new level of consciousness which it is unacceptable for the means of communication to continue to ignore.

Is it possible? Certainly! Provided that we really want it, ask for it forcefully, demand it. Is it asking too much, is it dreaming with open eyes? No! Humanity has made conquests that seemed impossible, when the readiest part of it has taken new perspectives and objectives as its own and has produced an aware and winning public opinion. In the society of global communication, when information and performance are animated by a new sense of responsibility, they will be able to do much to support and disseminate the new values and the new perspectives within humanity. I am certain that this too, dear readers, will soon happen.

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