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## EDITORIAL

*Not easy for me to write a Journal leader on the plane, which is taking me back to Italy. Too many emotions, too many contrasting feelings, not enough filtered yet, or elaborated, are flooding ~ heart and mind. Impossible a neutral reasoning. One cannot keep scientific impartiality when involved in passions, emotions, dreams, fights, success and defeat.*

*In Tigray, in the Almata district, I have seen for myself the devastating violence of malaria, much stronger than HIV / AIDS infections. One of the causes of this pathology increase is the rainwater the farmers are forced to use to irrigate the land and be able to grow food. A cynical destiny appears to hang on them, being struck by malaria or starving to death!*

*The terrorist attack in London, July 7th, have plunged us all into a nightmare from which we had thought to have just come out. And once again the political mass media tam-tam was started: off the immigrants from Europe, out of our country! The equation immigrant equal terrorist appears to have the most penetrating effect on the public opinion. No use the British birth certificates of the London attackers. The power holders seize any opportunity to try and inflate a sense of alarm in the citizens. Sometimes it is the heat emergency, sometimes the cold emergency, sometimes the pit-bull attacks, the tsunami, the avian disease. ...*

*People are scared and feel uncomfortable about the present and the future. They shut up their house doors and withdraw into their shells for more safety. Moreover, job insecurity, housing insecurity, emotional insecurity bring additional anxiety to all this. And yet, until few years ago, we had tried to convince ourselves that we were quite near to attain affluence and security as never before one could have thought of, or searched for: The daydream is over and the tricks have been uncovered. We have been forced to learn once more that to achieve safeness is our job, no one can do it for us. No magic wand can make us rich, more young, more attractive. Our personality, self-confidence, emotions are built up day after day, through sacrifice, challenge, struggles. Sometimes we are successful, sometimes defeated. This is the difficult and fascinating course of everyday life and it helps us discover .the extraordinary within us, beside us, that often, too often, alas, we overlook. We fear to be confronted with the other; the one inside us and the one we now meet every day on the bus, at the marketplace, in the queue at the post office. It is as if we had suddenly been awakened from a dream... 'The impression of fear still mixed with the certitude that it was only a nightmare. Tears go by, and we have let ourselves get trapped into the promise of easy earnings, easy beauty treatments... as if all this could take the place of human relationships.*

*No one can take our place when it comes to our engagement and responsibility. History itself, not only the daily events, depends on each one of us. Nobody else but we ourselves can propose our future and devise the path towards it. In life, it doesn't work delegating. We cannot restrict ourselves to discussing on the events, we are not the commentators, we are the main characters in the story. We cannot withdraw from the arena, here is the framework where can we engage our responsibility and our pleasure (( to soil our hands". Often, when defeat and wounds are more scorching, I end up thinking of*

*Antonio, Gramsci, in jail, in Turi, of his strenuous resistance against despair; disease and doubt. More often should we read his letters from the prison, a testimony of exceptional courage, sustained up to the very end. Then I realize that we all have been spared such a cruel destiny. Therefore, we have no right to complain, but we do have the duty of expanding on the matters, of getting angry, of deciding about our attitude and sharing with the others our experiences. We should narrate what we see with our hearts' eyes and our clarity of mind.*

*Our hope is that the journal may contribute to this purpose, not only by collecting scientific experiences, but seeking for deeper insights as well, stories and contributions from anyone willing to try with the others common ways and paths. For the simple reason that we share a common origin and that we all are linked to each other in a common destiny, towards an ever open future, but a common future, this too.*

Aldo Morrone

### ***THE ITALIAN DERMATOLOGICAL HOSPITAL (IDH)***

### **THE FIRST DERMATOLOGICAL HOSPITAL OF TIGRAY (ETHIOPIA) HAS BEEN OPENED AT QUIHA, MEKELLE**

*The hospital, built of grey stone, stands on a clearing of parched land, surrounded by houses made of timber and mud. A young woman, her eyes showing signs of great exhaustion, waits for her turn to be called into the examination room. She comes from very far; she has covered on foot a distance of nearly 200 km., carrying on her shoulder her 4-year-old little girl, who weighs less than 6 kg.*

*We are in the small village of Quiha, 10 km. from Mekelle, capital of Tigray, a region in the North of Ethiopia which covers an area as large as one fifth of Italy, with a total of about 50 medical practitioners for a population of 4 million inhabitants.*

*We are in the new Italian Dermatological Hospital, inaugurated in January 2005 by the International Institute of Medical, Anthropological and Social Sciences (IISMAS) following an agreement with Mekelle Government Hospital and the Tigray Health Bureau. The IDH is a member of the Italian Hospital World Alliance, coordinated by the Ministry of Health.*

*The hospital has 14 beds for in-patients and two examination rooms for out-patients, is the only dermatological hospital of the Tigray Region and the second in the whole Ethiopia, a country with a population of 74 millions. In that area leprosy, tuberculosis and malaria are endemic diseases, and the dermatological diseases are among the main causes of morbidity. Ethiopia is a country where contrasting situations coexist. On the one hand, it shows the fascination emanating from the world's most ancient archaeological sites -which caused Ethiopia to be called the "cradle of humanity"-, a people really exceptional for commitment, intelligence and culture, a huge variety of natural species and, picturesque panoramas of rare beauty. On the other hand, however, it is a country with an infant mortality rate among the highest of the planet, tormented by famines and droughts, where there are frequent electric power cuts and where The HIV infection has reached endemic proportions. The IDH offers free assistance to persons suffering from dermatological conditions, in a country where government and private health services must be paid for; almost always, by the patients themselves. In public hospitals the patients are charged for their beds, medicines, disposable syringes,*

*and for all the clinical and laboratory investigations necessary for a diagnosis. Medical treatments are guaranteed only to those who can pay for medical assistance, and such persons are very few indeed.*

*As from the coming month of June 2005 the Hospital will be able to take advantage of the teleconsultation service. It already can avail itself of the satellite connection to Internet.*

*At the moment the hospital working team is composed of a dermatologist, local well-trained and helpful personnel, two nurses and one health assistant. Over 60 patients are examined every day.*

*The most frequently observed pathologies are superficial and deep mycoses, leprosy, tuberculosis, viral infections,*

*HIV / AIDS, leishmaniosis, scabies, pediculosis, eczema, photodermatitis. Over 30% of the patients are seropositive. When there will be a second dermatologist, and a suitable vehicle for transport owned by the hospital will be available, it will be possible to comply with the request made by the health authorities of Tigray to establish a regular clinic for dermatology, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV / AIDS infections also in Adigrat, 75 km. from Mekelle.*

*It will so be possible to spare many people living in the district the trouble of having to reach the hospital after walking for several days, and it will be possible to examine patients who have not the means and the strength to afford such a long journey. ..Sometimes with a little sick girl on their shoulders!*

*Two weeks after admission to our hospital that little sick girl, who had come from so far and had been treated and properly fed, had recovered from her scabies and impetigo and had put on 4 kg. The doctor and the nurses saw her dance and sing softly in the agodo, the hospital common room, while the scent of freshly toasted coffee welcomed the guests in a sort of magic and ancient rite.*

*26 gennaio 2005 Aldo Morrone, Giuseppe Fontanarosa, Valeska Padovese, Silvana Trincone*

**Source**

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