

ITALIAN REPORT ON THE WORLD 2008

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The contents of the Third Migrants Report

With the *Third report on Italians in the World* the Migrants foundation confirms its yearly appointment of study.

The Italian emigration has one and half century of history; it was very intense in the late after-war and involved all the Italian regions (from Friuli Venezia Giulia and Trentino Alto Adige up to Calabria and Sicily) and it concerns many countries in the world (from the nearby Switzerland and Croatia up to trans-oceanic countries). The co-nationals abroad are almost 4 million, not less than 60 millions persons of Italian origin and even more those with reference to Italy. A testimony of this great epos is given by paintings and sculptures all over Italy, in big cities as well as in small towns and, for the first time, now a specific review is given. The cinema is not inferior with its impressing series of titles, of which the *Report* offers an wide panoramic.

Moreover, the Italian presence in the world means also language and culture courses: 34.689 of them have been promoted by the Ministry of External Affairs during the school-year 2006/2007, with a total of 650 thousand enrolled students, while the Society Dante Alighieri contributes with 400 national and foreign committees, centres of cultural assistance, libraries with reading halls, radio-television transmissions with more than 200.000 students.

The Italian emigration, placed between the country of origin and that of integration, induces us to pay attention to both countries and to be concerned with all the involved categories (the pioneers of the exodus, the intermediate generations, the new generations and the new migrants) and to take into consideration the diversity of places, times and sectors of commitment.

The *Report* re-proposes this picture from the statistical data (Aire, April 2008) and trying to go deep into its meaning.

The cognitive surprises of the Aire archive

Of the 3.734.428 Italians residing abroad, hardly a little more than half (59%) are effectively migrated, moving from Italy. More than one third, instead, was born abroad (34,3%) and 2,5% is enrolled in Aire for the acquisition of Italian citizenship, which usually happens for births abroad. Thus, the belief that Italian abroad and emigration are one and the same thing results to be without foundation.

Moreover, again contrary to what is usually thought, the 52,8% is constituted by celibates and singles compared to the 39% of married people and 2,7% of widows.

Though usually forgotten, the women are as numerous as men (45,5% e 1.774.677) and work at all responsibility levels. The persons whose age is above 65 (19,3%) are more than the under-aged (16,6%), with aging levels higher than not only those among males abroad, but also the females in Italy: moreover, among the classes of intermediate age the 40 years aged women are more numerous.

Almost half of this female people (46,2%) has a ten years enrolment in Aire and a little more than one sixth (18,2%) were enrolled during the past three years. During the past twelve months there was the enrolment of 85.000 women and an equal number of men: this proves how wrong it is to picture Aire as an archive that registers only things of the past.

From official data to field survey

An official archive like Aire has the merit of its global character registering all the Italians abroad, while to describe the particularity of the Italian collective reality the field-survey is required. Therefore, the Migrants Foundation, together with a group of Patronages (Acli, Epasa, Inas, Sias) started the experience of an investigation during which more than 500 persons were interviewed in various European and ultra-oceanic cities. Thus, though it was not the matter of a fully

representative champion, the interviews have allowed us to individuate some fixed points, which induce us to remove the patina of welfarism with which often the emigration is associated.

Usually the co-nationals abroad have succeeded in improving their situation, possess a house (and not few of them have also a house in Italy), spend part of their holidays in Italy (or would like to do it if the high cost of trans-oceanic journeys were not an obstacle), they persevere in their religion, even if slowly, slowly they tend to attend the local church more than that of the Italian Catholic mission.

This emerging situation of stability must not surprise us because many of those who were interviewed have matured a considerable migratory old age, considering that the most intense streams of the exodus were verified in the 50s and 60s of the latest century, with an aftermath in the successive decennium and rarer during the years closer to us.

This long stay abroad has deepened their roots *in loco*, breaking a series of *cliché*. In fact, according to the research made by Migrantes-Patronages, there are only few persons who:

- send to Italy part of their savings, which once constituted a kind of “golden rain” benefiting their families and the whole country;
- intend to repatriate definitively, a perspective that once was the dream of all the immigrants;
- follow prevalently the Italian associationism, being they more committed to local structures;
- prefer to speak only Italian, because they understand the importance of the local language.

This does not mean that the events of their country of origin are not followed: the co-national read also Italian newspapers, follow the RAI programmes and feel their nearness to Italy, though never in a uniform and fully totalising way.

A certain attachment to their original country was proved also by the degree of participation in the latest elections as well as in their enrolment to Aire, personal and of one’s own children, however according to differentiated levels and according to the place of integration and the migratory seniority.

The Italians continue to be a prolongation of the Italian reality, but in a different way from the past; it is a difference which they are not always aware of and which require innovative perspectives.

A gallery of personages and common folks

The most brilliant approach to emigration is the historical one, which allows a surprising gallery of personages. For instance, this year we commemorate the bi-centenary of the birth of Antonio Meucci, a typical case of skill and misfortune. His anniversary was celebrated in New York on 13th April 2008, as an initiative of the *Italian Heritage & Culture Committee*. The inventor of the telephone, (born in Florence on 13th April 1808 and died in New York on 18th October 1889), migrated to Cuba and worked as a stage-designer in a theatre of the Havana. Having the theatre been destroyed by a fire, he took refuge to a Staten Island, where to eke out a living he made candles, a thing that Giuseppe Garibaldi also did when he was his guest, at the end of the Roman Republic (1849). To communicate with his wife, bedridden because of serious arthritis, Meucci had the idea of a proto-type rudimental telephone, channelling the voice through bronze threads with cardboard ear-trumpets on both ends. Having spent a long time in a hospital because of an accident on a ferry-boat, his wife, deprived of news and needful of money, sold the models of the telephone. Meucci was a great genius, but not equally lucky in the economic success, so that his patent went to Alexander Graham Bell, though the memory renders honour to him.

The study of the Italians in the world makes us meet many more personages who arouse admiration for their courage of emigrating, the will of succeeding, the multiform ingenious talent. For instance, Filippo Mazzei, another Tuscan person unknown to most of us, who tried his utmost in Italy as well as in the USA (farmer, writer, ambassador). The President John Kennedy expressed his gratitude to him together with Ronald Reagan, who in 1980 defined him as “a patriot and collaborator of Thomas Jefferson”; it is due to him that the sentence “All men are created equal” was inserted in the Declaration of the American Independence.

It is even thicker the host of Italians who distinguished themselves for their professional commitment: they constitute the true backbone of our presence abroad, favouring the economic and

cultural growth. For this reason every year the Italian regions, and the associations working abroad, award with prizes several deserving persons for their outstanding action in the field of research, culture, social and artistic commitment, as well as relations with the regional realities.

Out of countless examples, we can mention the electronic engineer *Renato Berzolla* from Borgotaro (Parma), president of the Lux Engineering in New York, specialised in security and visual systems for airports: he was given the name of “Man of the year” by the Valtarese Foundation, as well as that of “active pastoral worker”.

From the feminine side, Fiammetta Jahreiss-Montagnani, in the month of May 2008, was elected president of the municipality Council of Zurigo, thus becoming the first immigrated woman, whose mother-tongue was not German, to be conferred with the highest citizen charge. We like to remind that the municipality Council is competent to define the application for citizenship; just for this motive Montagnani, with a group of councillors, came to Rome to study the question comparatively, together with the drawers of Caritas/Migrantes.

Speaking of emigration we need to refer also to the many Italians who carry on their work honestly and with commitment, as the Patronages, the Associations, Comites and Consulates attest: they are common persons whose names will hardly be known. The two levels are not disconnected because the cases of success are born just in this favourable humus, which is a motive of pride for Italy.

The aged emigrants, a bridge between the past and the present

The Italian emigration does not composed of only aged persons, though they are its conspicuous part, almost one fifth: 687.423 are *over* 65 years old, out of whom 343.250 are women.

Even in the present globalised world, in which Italy is very much worried for its future, the reminder of the “pioneers” is important, the pioneers of the immediate after-war who left the country, as well as the children of those who left with the first migratory waves, between the ‘800 and ‘900. These are rarely interested in their repatriation, yet they press on the Regions for the empowering of programmes of their summer visits, to see once again the place of their childhood and their relatives.

The first motives for not cancelling these aged people from our memory is that of gratitude. Without their courageous decision of emigrating and living abroad and the consequent structural benefits, today Italy would not be placed at the apex of the world as far as wealth and development is concerned. The second motive is strictly linked with the actual cultural implications. Italy is witnessing intense migratory streams from the poorer countries, comparable to those who in the past left our country. Our co-nationals are a living memory of the causes that are at the origin of this uprooting, of the adaptation difficulties in a different society, the need of reciprocal understanding, the development of the welcoming country, understood as the commitment involving the new comers. Thus we reach the necessity of putting together our past history (of the exodus) and the actual history (of the immigration), an aspect which the *Report Migrantes* stresses, without failing to mention the differences, but also without denying the common line, that poses the migrations as a bond between the countries and their different degree of development.

Abroad, as youths and graduated

Under the generational aspect, the youths constitute the other extreme: they are persons who plan their own future or live the first phase of their career.

Many Italians abroad (54%, about 2.013.000 persons) are youths under 35 years of age. Out of these, 3 over 10 are underage (606.000, almost one sixth of the entire Italian population living beyond the boundaries), about 2 over 5 are between 18 and 24 years old (almost 860.000) and more than one fourth (27%, equal to about 547.000 individuals) belong to a group of more advanced age, namely between 25 and 34 years old.

The majority of these youths is in Europe (1,2 million, equal to 60,6% of the total, about 3 over 5), a continent that is nearer and culturally more affine: it is here that young students, workers and professionals find more opportunities of formation and introduction to employments, thanks to the support of specific research and exchange programmes in a communitarian area.

From an investigation of Almalaurea (2007), a consortium of the most important Italian universities, we know that, five years after obtaining the degree, the motives of emigration (definitive or at long term) in almost half the cases, are those of seeking better conditions of work usually in great business establishments. The persons who have left Italy have moved prevalently towards the United Kingdoms (19,2%), France (12,6%), Spain (11,4%) e the USA (9,8%).

The most recurrent degrees among those who work abroad, as it happens in Italy, are from the literary, linguistic, engineering and economic-statistics faculties: while the jurisprudence degree is more finalised to the exigencies of the Italian context. The percentages of those who expatriate with degrees from the scientific and technologic branch are definitely superior to those of the humanistic group, though, in an absolute way, their number is rather low.

The Italian graduated women who go abroad are as many as men, but their situation is sensibly worse because they are sub-represented at direction level and receive inferior retributions, though they are anyhow more satisfying, if compared to the Italian *standards*.

With the passing of time the hypothesis of a repatriation becomes always less probable, for both women and men: at five years from obtaining the degree, 52 over 100 degree holders abroad consider their return very improbable. Thus the theme of the “loss of brains” is felt again, due to the fact that Italy, because of well known deficiencies, is not able to exercise a strong attraction for their repatriation, or to use at a higher level the Italian degree holders and the immigrated in the territory.

Italians who were not born in Italy: the second and third generations

The total number of Italians enrolled in Aire by birth (1.280.065) attests that the fact of being linked to Italy without having been born in its territory is a rather diffused condition concerning 1 over 3 Italians abroad, consequently, a different way of interest between the motherland and the diaspora, necessary especially in the case of the youths.

In the field of this category, the youths deserve a specific attention: it is the matter of the second and, sometimes, the third generations registered by “birth” from parents residing abroad. During the period 1990-2007,, while 170.000 minors emigrated effectively from Italy with their parents, those born in loco were 433.691, an average of 24 thousand per year (1 every 20 births registered in Italy). They are more or less from southern parents (55%), but a considerable component from the North, (31%), is not missing. They reside prevalently in European countries (65% of the total, out of which 47% in UE) and in the American countries (30%, of which 25,7% in Latin America).

Their link with Italy is different from that of their parents and they find it indispensable to settle some new parameters of intervention, by facing a very binding challenge, as it has been felt with the planning of a purposeful World Conference (December 2008).

Their bond with Italy, or sense of being Italian, includes various social and cultural implications, which the youths do not refuse to face, on the condition of explicating them in a concrete manner and of combining them with the reality of living in another society. They insist on an increased economic co-operation with the countries in which they reside and, very much pragmatically, they are open to an exchange that may help them in their professional life. The routine, the superficial, the rhetoric –which are anyhow to be regrettable also for other categories- is for them absolutely out of place.

The *Migrantes Report* dedicates a chapter to France, a country where 4 million of residents are from Italian origin, in a proportion of 9 to 1, if compared with those who have kept the citizenship. The Italians are integrated in the system, speak French, feel bound to the history of this people (even when they do not have the citizenship), they share the culture, the social manners, modelling their identity afresh, everything according to a process of advanced stabilisation that urges them to stay in loco even when they retire. Their relations with Italy have not disappeared, but have slowed down and their visits are also less frequent: very much depend also on the local and parental nets. The bond with Italy, if safeguarded, is more affective than juridical, also cultural but with more attachment to the French context, in which a kind of dilution has been verified.

The second and third generations, constitute a different reality, if compared to the emigrants of the past, but are anyhow a considerable richness requiring an adaptation on behalf of the politicians, of the operators and the students themselves.

Necessity of a renewed migratory politics

It is doubtless that for a pastoral organism like the Migrantes Foundation the interest for the emigration includes religious implications with an impact on social life and the need of fulfilling a journey together with many more agents.

The Church minds this sector not only to guarantee a spiritual assistance, to be assured through the Italian Catholic Missions and the link with other local diocesan structures, but also for the significance of immigration itself. For a Christian, the departure from a known context in search of a more promising reality is, like the parable of the entire human existence, an experience rich in meaning, but tending towards higher horizons. Just for this motive the Church recommends an attitude of availability and solidarity towards all the persons who are involved in the mobility, not only the Italians who go abroad, but also the foreigners who come to Italy. “Emigration” and immigration are parts of the same “small packet” and in both cases the integration is an inalienable perspective.

Emigration and immigration are also an indispensable support for the future of Italy in a globalised world. The Italians, who live directly in foreign countries, and the immigrants who have their parents and acquaintances in their country of origin, can be valued like a real net capable of helping Italy on its way of economic progress and world trade. Attention, assistance, promotion: these are some key words that guide us in the reading of the *Report Migrantes 2008*.