

Papers Received

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Italian Australian in the New Millennium

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My contention is that to identify the Italian-Australians in the new millennium it is important to analyze their predecessors. It is vital to understand the mentality of the Italian immigrants and why they migrated, plus the difference between the 'first', 'second' and 'third' wave. I propose to concentrate on the 'second wave' and briefly touch on the other two. I believe that the 'second wave' of Italian immigrants that entered Australia post World War 2, was socially engineered and had enormous repercussions. The impact of such an influx of culturally diverse and Non English Speaking people over a brief period is extensive. I propose that these Italian immigrants through their rich cultures have changed and affected Australian's community and economy, particularly agriculture and Australian's cuisine. In addition, they contributed to the labour market at first predominantly as blue-collar workers, in factories, infrastructure, irrigation, construction and farming. Later they became prominent in industries such as engineering, construction, fashion and hospitality. Whilst Italian immigrants affected many industries both directly and indirectly, I aim to limit my discussion to the second wave and show the correlation with the agricultural industry, especially the fruit and vegetable one. In Victoria, this industry is estimated at 55 million export dollars, per year. (*Herald Sun* 27/12/99) I claim that some of the seeds for these vegetables originally entered Australia with the 'second wave' and sometimes as contraband.

Furthermore, I contend that the large influx of rural, agricultural Italian people affected not only the broader Australian community, but, also, the established Italo-Australian, 'first wave' community. The newly arrived Italian immigrants generally continued to practice their rural, regional, popular cultures, therefore, redefining what is Italian in Australia and causing some ambiguity within the Italian community. This paper focuses on Victoria where 42% of Italian immigrants have settled.

My methodology has been to review the type of Italian permitted to enter Australia especially the second wave. Part of this paper has come about because of my conversations with people in the Italian community. These conversations brought forth issues on immigration

and the Italian community, such as, Australia's selection policy with Italian immigrants; the program of resettlement – assimilation; how realistic was it? were Italian foods available when post war Italian migrants arrived? Finally, what impact did the large influx of Italian immigrants have on the host community? I looked at some documents on the Contraband Act and its history. The origin of my paper was on the contribution by the second wave Italians towards the agricultural industry. However, as I progressed I felt that I needed to ask who were the 'first wave' and their contribution. To satisfy this inquiry I did a brief research on 'first wave' Italian migrants through the study of secondary material and more conversations. This brief research generated more questions on the perceptions of what it was to be Italian. I would like to thank all those Italians who gave up their time to converse with me and the staff at Customs House Victoria for their help.

Immigration Selection or Social Engineering.

Historically, all Italians who had arrived in Australia before World War 2 are considered as the "First wave". The Italian presence in Australian's history existed since Captain Cook's voyage, James Mario Matra was amongst the officers on the ship the Endeavour. Historian, Pino Bosi, claims that Matra was the first to propose a settlement for New South Wales. (Pino Bosi 2000: 38) Later, the gold fields brought Italians seeking a quick fortune, including Raffaello Carboni. He became involved in the Eureka Stockade rebellion, in Ballarat, and shortly after wrote an account of the event. Italian immigrants continued to arrive in small numbers especially after the First World War when Europe was left destroyed and politically unstable. Choice of coming to Australia was partially due to the USA closing its immigration intake. Therefore, those Italians wishing to escape Europe and Mussolini's politics applied to Australia. By 1933, there were 26,756 Italians in Australia. In 1937, Italian immigration into Australia stopped and did not resume until 1946. (Erik S. Lloga 1998:6) These earlier Italian immigrants comprised a broad cross section from the total Italian community, intellectuals, and travellers, adventurers, refugees, professionals, tradesmen, people belonging to religious orders and many agricultural labourers. A few have left behind a legacy of writings, engineering achievements, cultural contribution and expansion in industries. In 1947, this Italian community had increased to 34,000 in Australia, about one third settled in Victoria.

However, by 1947 Australia's small population became a concern to its authorities. This had become a major issue especially since the enemy

attack on Darwin during the war, it made clear that Australia was vulnerable to invasion. However, population increase was insufficient without development in urban utilities such as, housing, infrastructure, electricity, irrigation, labour for mines, expansion in both the primary and secondary industries. Both the increase of population and urban developments complimented each other for both military strategy and economics. The Australian Immigration Department in Europe was made to recruit, first Anglo-Celtic people, then Northern Europeans, however, all these did not fill the desired quota. So they began to recruit Southern Europeans, the Italians came under this geographical category. (Some North Italians see this geographical division as absurd because they have much more in common with the Austrians and Germans than with the Greeks.) The Australian Immigration Authorities targeted Italy for specific manual labourers. There was no longer a random selection of Italians entering Australia, but specific types for specific employment, The selection policy was an act of social engineering by the Australian Government.

For Italians to enter Australia manual labouring was the criteria, as was evident by the tests given by the Immigration officers. The tests were solely on physical capacity. Prospective applicants did not participate in an aptitude test or any other skill potentials. I believe this to be social engineering.

In my discussion with Italians I was retold the same story many times over regarding application and testing for permission to enter Australia. The men and women's physical capacity was Australian Immigration authorities' prime interest. For example, 'Tony' recounted that as a twenty year old, in the 1950s, he applied to enter Australia. He stated in his application that part of his previous employment had been working in England, as a house servant. He had been there several years and spoke a little English. 'Tony' went for an interview and soon received a letter stating that he had failed the required criteria for entry. Undeterred, he applied again, with the same result. Later, friends who had been successful informed him that it was imperative at the interview to show callused hard working hands. 'Tony' reapplied and at the interview again they asked to examine his hands which he had ensured were callused with dirty fingernails. His application was accepted.

Another case was nine year old 'Giovanni' whose parents applied for entry into Australia in the early 50s. Each member of his large family was examined and all were accepted to enter Australia as self-funding immigrants, except young 'Giovanni'. The boy was classified as unfit to

enter because he had a small hernia. The trip was delayed until he had had the operation and had fully recovered. He was re-examined and finally permitted to enter, and ready for factory work within four years.

It is obvious that the future prospects for both these people and most other Italian migrants, in Australia, was to work only as labourers. Moreover, that other skills or intelligence were not assessed because these were not required. Those immigrants who were multi-skilled, professional or semi-professional did not reveal this, otherwise like 'Tony' they would have been rejected. In Australia, the establishment refused to recognize some skills or professions held by Italians. This compelled some to do extra studies at their own cost to adhere to particular requirements of the profession. According to Arena, "the people who had the greatest difficulties in coping were the people with better education, often with professional qualifications, which were not recognized in Australia." (Franca Arena et al 1987:366) Due to the requirement of manual labour, the bias for entry into Australia was not only class but also gender, as more males were permitted entry.

Repercussions

I believe that the social engineering applied by the Australian Immigration Authorities to Italians permitted entry into Australia in the late 40s, 50s and 60s, led to many repercussions.

The Government policy for resettlement of the Italian immigrants was assimilation. According to Castles, "assimilation was based on the idea that only Anglo-Australian culture was legitimate and that other cultures would have to disappear" (Steven Castles et al 1992: 52). Therefore, when it became obvious that non-English speakers were arriving in large numbers, the government implemented the policy with greater urgency. While en route to Australia the Italian immigrants were taught basic English. Also, "the ethnic press was discouraged and newspapers had to be partly published in English. Until 1974 only two and a half per cent of radio broadcasts were allowed in languages other than English and they had to be accompanied by a translation. After 1960 the ABC broadcast bushfire alerts in six languages." (Richard Broome 1984:210). The immersion of the Italian immigrant into Australian culture was to be total. It was a sink or swim situation.

Evidently, assimilation for the type of Italian permitted to enter was to be at the bottom of the strata where there was no power, perhaps to remain a pool for factory labor for several generations, like young 'Giovanni'. Fortunately, it did not work for various reasons. Firstly, it was due to the type of person allowed to enter. The majority of Italian

immigrants though from similar rural areas came from a culturally diverse society, as there were regional differences. They had always lived in a multicultural society and yet retained their local identity. Presumably, they would continue to do so in Australia. Much of Italy, for centuries had been occupied by invading armies and later new forms of government. These inadvertently reinforced a strong sense of local identity within the community. Furthermore, there was a policy of 'chain migration', where Italians in Australia would sponsor fellow villagers to come here, so that they surrounded themselves with 'paesani'. Another hindrance to assimilation was that, most Italian immigrants, once in Australia, were concentrated in similar employment and industries. They congregated in low social economic suburbs, as these were within their budget as blue-collar workers. All this concentration had the affect that the Italians continued to practice and reinforce their cultures, with limited interaction with the wider Australian society. Furthermore, due to the war there remained some tension and racialism by Australians towards the Italians. In retrospect, the assimilation policy was unrealistic, contradictory and a painful experience to the new Italian immigrants.

Admittedly, the influx of immigrants contributed to Australia's population and labour market, but initially also strained its resources. There was a housing shortage in the early 50s partly due to Australia's returned soldiers setting up a family and the recession. Consequently, the immigration department reduced the immigrant intake and disallowed migrant family units to enter. This created a high proportion of Italian males in the community which led to further social tension and other repercussions. Tension arose in the work place as the Italians worked very hard to earn money to pay debts they had incurred at home and simultaneously to try to bring out there families. Up until 1969 Italians, unlike northern European and British migrants had no rights to assistance to bring their families with them. (Stephen Castles 1992: 41) A few men who could not accumulate sufficient funds to bring out their family may have abandoned the one in Italy and sometimes set up another family here. Some problems with intermarriages were that men become alienated from their family in Italy, because the parents had expected them to return and marry an Italian girl. Tension also arose between Italian and Australian young men over female companionship. Boarding houses became overcrowded with Italian men. Later, to rectify this gender imbalance, the Australian immigration department coerced several shiploads of Italian females to come and placate these 'unruly men'. Concurrently, proxy brides were encouraged. This program in

turn had other ramifications. Two people who had never seen each other were committed by law and the church to remain together and become a family, sometimes it ended with suffering. Occasionally, a young Italian woman arrived to see her husband for the first time, he looked nothing like the photos that had been exchanged throughout the 'courtship'. Another problem was that letters exchanged throughout the courtship may have been written by a third party, leaving the husband and wife total strangers. These issues left young women vulnerable and in miserable relationships or stranded in a foreign country. Due to the increased male population, young women within the Italian community may have been coerced into marriage at a young age. Another ramification was that by the time families were permitted to enter and be reunited, some children would not recognize their fathers and this led to poor relationships. Poor relationships would happen also if husbands and wives had spent too many years apart, this affected the capacity of the family to function and what emotional strain was it under?

The strain on the resources and its repercussion continued for a number of years. Those worst affected were those who did not understand the system and were overburdened with other issues – the Italian immigrants. Besides the physical and emotional strain, the Italian immigrants were accustomed to particular foods and variety that was not available in Australia. This added to the alienation experienced.

Culture And Foods.

The Italians had a staple diet with emphasis on fresh vegetables and fruit. The food variety was limited in Australia. In addition, there were few stores supplying Italian foods. In Carlton, in the early 50s, there were two stores that imported Italian foods, wine, cheese, olives, nuts, hams, sweets, pasta and coffee. Furthermore, Customs authorities controlled imports to protect the local industries and affected variety availability. The customs authorities feared that imported cheeses would affect Australia's dairy industries and the same applied to the smallgoods and beef industry. Anyhow, imported foodstuff from Italy after a long voyage and sometimes left on the docks too long made the produce both very expensive and sometimes rotten, thus limiting availability.

One needs to understand that Italian migrants needed particular foods for the practicing of social events, cultural and catholic religious rituals. For example, sugar almonds were needed for the rituals of the sacraments, dried fish for Good Friday, "la castagnata" (chestnuts)

Christmas sweets, essence for cakes, alcohol such as wine and grappa. (Diana Ruzzene Grollo.1997: passim) Amongst the Italians, there was little tolerance for mutton, fish and chips, or the meat pie. For example at Bonegilla migrant camp, there were constant disputes about the poor variety of foods given to the immigrants. One disillusioned immigrant says, "the strange mutton, vegetables lifted out of water and sloshed on your plate, and that blasted tomato sauce". (Glenda Sluga 1962: 38.) These sentiments were common. The assumption by the Australian community was that the Italian immigrants were starving in Europe therefore they should accept anything given to them. Admittedly, during the war some people in Italy were deprived of food, but they had experienced variety of foods, because of Europe's proximity to Africa and the Middle East. To put it simply the Australian cuisine did not have the variety that was available in some parts of Europe.

Admittedly, in the mid 1800s, a manual was published with a comprehensive list of fruit and vegetables, for cultivation in Victoria. The manual titled 'How to settle in Victoria' was printed in 1855 and suggests a broad range of vegetables and fruits. It refers to artichokes which "thrive remarkably well in Australia, and are esteemed by some persons, but yet they are not so universally known as many other vegetables." (Rustics 1855 : 58) It also, mentions " the tomato, or love-apple, as it is sometimes called, is an exceedingly useful plant, though its value is but little known in England, as the fruit is but rarely used, except for the manufacture of sauces". (Rustics 1855: 72). The book refers to two species of beans and nine varieties. It seems that, while some knowledge of the varieties of foods existed and possibly may have originally been cultivated, these would not prosper unless there was a demand by consumers. The entire enterprise may have been futile for lack of demand, with so few non Anglo-Celtic people here. However, the influx of Italian immigrants in the 50s wanted and needed varieties of fruits and vegetables that were not on the market.

Many Italian immigrants felt the need to expand on the availability of vegetables and fruits and took matters into their own hands. Due to the type (social engineering) of person allowed entry into Australia, the majority of newly arrived Italian immigrants could grow their vegetables and raise farm animals. They had brought with them skills to make pasta, breads, sauces, preserves, cheeses, wines and pork sausages. In addition, as the immigrants arrived, so did particular foods, seeds, kernels and cuttings, mostly as contraband. In my conversations within the Italian community, it has been stated that these items were hidden in suitcases, coat linings, pockets and underwear.

Contraband

I do not wish to be seen as legitimizing the breaking of Australian laws by the Italian immigrants or depicting the Italians as criminals. But the carrying of seeds, kernels and cuttings into Australia has often arisen in the community and yet never fully studied or acknowledged that it happened. In any case, David Day, claims that the Customs Act, "From 1903, cases of smuggling and petty infractions of the Customs Act were also dealt with under Part XV – a move that was probably illegal as it was exercising a judicial power constitutionally reserved to the courts. Because of the trivial nature of the cases covered, it was never challenged. It was not until 1962 that Alf Rattigan advised against the use of Part XV, except in minor cases, because of its doubtful legality. It was abolished completely in October 1974." (David Day 1996: 360) How the Italian immigrants understood their action is difficult to assess, evidently they did not take it seriously as they continued to carry in seed, kernels and cuttings. Someone would carry a small amount of seeds and share them around with their friends and relatives, gradually the seeds permeated through the Italian community. In one of my conversations a woman recounted, "I was only a child in the 50s, my mother came home from her friend's house all excited. She had been given some 'ruccola' seeds, which were carried into the country in a dress's lining. Mother naturally gave some to uncle to sow. So if there was a mishap this doubled their chance of a successful crop". What value did they put on these seeds and cuttings? Clearly, there was no monetary value. However, I believe it may have been more for cultural or aesthetic reasons.

Perhaps, to grow their own vegetables and fruits was to surround themselves with an environment that they recognized, similar to the Anglo-Celts when they first arrived in Australia. According to Bolton, the English, "sense of what was pleasing was very much a product of their experience of the British environment. Their perceptions were not trained to appreciate the qualities of a landscape as different from Britain as the Australian bush". (Geoffrey Bolton 1981:15) Also, the Acclimatizing Societies in Australia, existed until the early 1900s, purely to import flora and fauna from England and introduce it into Australia's environment. The list is long, the greatest devastation to the Australian environment is the rabbit and the fox. The rabbit was to supplement as food, the trout and fox were for sport, the sparrow to eat the caterpillars from the cabbages, blackberries to feed European birds and others. (Eric Rolls 1969: *passim*) Perhaps, the peasant Italian

immigrants defined their own beauty, as the corn swaying, the tomatoes ripening, vines climbing and fruit trees in blossom.

Stories like the one above about the rucola seeds are so common within the Italian community that it would be futile to repeat more stories. The list of contraband goods that arrived with the immigrants is equally long. There is the chestnut, walnut and the vine cuttings, fennel, black popping corn, zucchini, eggplant, the many variety of radicchio, yellow tomatoes, various type of beans, artichokes, rucola, mandarins, grapes, persimmons, herbs and so many others. One Italian commercial grower stated that there were at least twenty varieties of vegetables not available in Australia in the 50s. I believe that lack of understanding by the Australian community of Italian culture, especially the type practiced by the Italian peasant migrants that were permitted to enter (second wave) caused some conflict. As peasants, the Italian migrants had a passion for cultivation, given the opportunity they would surround their houses in Australia with both fruits trees and vegetables.

Evidently, the Customs officers were very busy in the 50s and 60s. The customs officers checked for contraband goods on each ship when it arrived, especially the ships from Southern Europe. On arrival, migrants from Southern European were searched 100% and the British searched between 10% - 25%. (David Day 1996: 312) In 1956 customs officers found in the luggage of Italians “ a box of sand and a population of snails, a tin of olive oil with tiny bottles of liqueur essence for illicit distillation, 16 pounds of salami” (David Day 1996:311) It would seem that some assumptions were made. Evidently, essence could be used for alcoholic drinks, but in my conversation with an Italian pastry cook I was told that essence was used to make Italian cakes, especially the Christmas cakes.

The Custom's Act was enforced on imported goods for many reasons; to preserve the industries here and to prevent any adverse affect on the community, as would happen with narcotic drugs and weapons. Furthermore, to penalize people and collect revenue, so that the customs department would be self-sufficient. Finally, to prevent some of the calamities that had occurred on the environment as with the Anglo-Celtic imports of the previous century.

The ramification of the Italian immigrant caught carrying contraband goods is a study on its own. What justice did they receive? Could they really understand why it was illegal and how were they told? Did language barriers cause problems? Were Italians adequately represented in court? These are just a few issues.

The 'first wave' Italian immigrants had worked as vegetable growers in Victoria and other states since the 1800s, their impact was limited as the community was then small and scattered. I believe that the second wave of Italian migrants has contributed to Australia's agricultural industry not solely through the carrying of contraband, but equally so, by demands on the market place made by a large Italian community. Both these influenced each other.

Imported commercial agricultural goods increasingly were permitted entry into Australia by the late sixties and early seventies. Undoubtedly the variety of fruit and vegetables in Australia today must be attributed to the many immigrants that have arrived since 1788 and the Italian immigrants of the second wave were responsible for a significant share. The export of the fruit and vegetable industries in Victoria is worth 55 million dollars per year. I believe that this contribution was due to the type of Italian permitted to enter Australia, and secondly, the large number allowed entry in such a short period. Because the Italians' culture is to drink wine with their meals, they, inadvertently, boosted and promoted Australia's wine industry. The Italian immigrants were the largest non-English speaking community in Australia and it has made an impact on Australia's way of life in various ways that has not been adequately studied.

As the above indicates, the 'second wave' Italian immigrants brought with them a strong popular culture. Amongst other things it is evident from their passion for foods, vegetable and fruits. It is expressed in the community by the many Italian restaurants, cafes, home wine making, sauce making, and sausage making and with the many social regional clubs where dialects are spoken and popular songs are sung. This popular culture is active. The concept of making one's own produce is still alive at the present day even when it is cheaper and easier to purchase the product; the making of the tomato sauce as was seen in the film *Looking for Alibrandi*. Some families continue the ritual of making sausages or wine. There is a sufficient demand that several stores in Melbourne sell tools and implements specifically for the making of the above produce. But is the practice of this popular culture truly Italian?

What Is Italian?

I believe that, due to the social engineering of Italians permitted to enter in the 'second wave' they redefined what is Italian in Australia. The expression of popular culture by the large number of Italian immigrants (second wave) had caused some ambiguity with the pre-war Italian migrants 'first wave' and the Australian community. I claim

that assumptions were made as to what was Italian both by the pre-war Italians and by the Australian community. The pre-war Italian migrants were a cross section of the Italian community, some were educated, some had been urban dwellers and others were peasants. They had arrived in Australia for many reasons and integrated more easily into mainstream Australia. Mainstream Australia assumed the Italian culture to be the Renaissance, art, opera, a uniform language, and cuisine. Perhaps, writers in English, such as Forster, Hemingway, Mark Twain and the mass media, reinforced that same particular type of Italian. In addition, the universities and Italian literature Institutes propagated this type of Italian. The Italian community in pre-war Australia was small, this made it simple for others to stipulate what was Italian.

Due to the small pre-war Italian community, it may have appeared more cohesive and integrated. In Victoria, there were several Italian clubs, the Cavour club, Aeolian Islands Association, the anti-fascist, Matteotti Club and later the Casa d'Italia and *Il Giornale Italiano* newspaper. The war period forced most of these to close or be severely restricted. Throughout the war, the Italian community took a low profile, as it suddenly found itself as part of the enemy. Over four thousand Italian men were interned in Australia, some of whom had been born here. While others were compelled to report to the police station weekly, with restricted travel and some were even dismissed from their jobs. According to Lloga, possession of radios and cameras was restricted and the speaking of foreign languages on the telephone was prohibited. (Erik S Lloga 1998: passim) The 'first wave' Italians were forced to realize that they were not truly accepted as Australians after all. Some became afraid to speak Italian in public, fearing racial hostilities. I believe that this led, to the Italian migrants of the 'first wave' displacing their sense of Italian identity.

The boost of post war Italian immigrants (second wave) brought the Italian community in Australia in 1954 to 120,000, by 1961, it reached 228,300, and by 1971 it was 289,500. (Robert Pascoe 1987: 244) The large community plus their strong sense of identity made the Italians a little more 'bold' than those of 'first wave'. They spoke their dialects and Italian language unabashed, they continued to practice their popular culture, the growing of the vegetable garden, producing home made sauce, sausages and wine. They continued to practice a popular religion as they had in Italy. The men carried knives as they had done in the fields in Italy; they saw these as a useful tool. However, the Australian authorities saw carrying a knife as a lethal weapon. In 1952, there were riots by the Italian migrant at Bonegilla camp, "Australian troops with

armoured cars were sent to quell the disturbances". (Stephen Castles et al. 1992; 41) Italians also demonstrated in the major cities of Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. The 'first wave' Italians were wary of the 'second wave' Italian migrant's sense of identity and confidence. If to be Italian was what the 'second wave' represented, then the image of Italy that the first wave held onto was a myth. The old Italy that they had known had changed. The pre-war Italian community's sense of identity was displaced, first by the poor treatment they had received during the war and then by what the new Italian migrants represented as Italian. Furthermore, the 'second wave' Italians had expected the first wave Italians to be more affluent and established as the letters written had claimed. It seemed that the 'first wave' had become more Australian, even their Italian language was sprinkled with English words which the 'second wave' could not understand. The many assumptions made on both sides led to some discord.

The Italian immigrant of the seventies and eighties 'third wave' was different again. Fewer people migrated; those that did were more educated and professional. The criteria for manual labour no longer existed for Italians and the assimilation policy had been replaced by multiculturalism. There was availability of a variety of foods equal to that in Italy. The large influx of Italian catholic immigrants of the 50s, empowered the predominately Irish Catholic Church and schools, giving it leverage to lobby the government for financial support. Overall, the 'third wave' of Italian immigrants had it much easier on their arrival to Australia than previous waves because the path was paved. The 'third wave' too added a new definition of what is Italian. I claim that because the largest migrant intake was the second wave and it was not representative of a cross section of the Italian community it has allowed a more popular culture to be identify as Italian.

The many aspects that affected the Italian immigrant in Australia needs to be researched, so that, future generations can understand. Many assumptions were made as to what is to be 'Italian'. Perhaps, it is the practice of both a popular regional culture and the elite uniform culture.

Conclusion

To access who are the Italian-Australians in the New millennium we need to understand the different types of Italian Migrant permitted to enter Australia. There were many variables that determined the migrant, such as, the white Australian policy, Australia's population needs, the type of industries here and what agreement was made with the Italian

government. In addition, it must be considered that those that applied to come here and those that were finally accepted are not necessarily the same. A total cross-section of the Italian community did not enter Australia post war. Three regions of Italy contributed more people to immigration than other regions. This factor contributes to the present fact that some Italian regional identities appear stronger while others are weaker. Nevertheless, the majority of immigrants came from rural Italy peasant background because that is what the Australian Immigration Department wanted and permitted to enter. This was social engineering. Furthermore, because males were required for manual work, they were in the majority and this created a gender imbalance, which led to other ramifications. To project who are the Italian-Australians in the new Millennium we need to look at who were their predecessors.

Claudio Alcorso: an Adventurer's Life

Joseph Talia

Claudio Alcorso is one of the genuine success stories of the Italian Australian experience: his is the genuine migrant story with all its attendant peaks and troughs.

He was born into a middle class Roman family, furnished with a good education, good contacts and an innate intelligence. In Australia he was interned in a prisoner of war camp as an enemy alien, but he survived to achieve the great prize of Australian musical culture: the position of Foundation Chairman of the Australian Opera and for a time its Managing Director. He was also a director of the Australian Ballet, the Australian Elizabethan Trust, and a member of the Music Board of the Australian Council. At the heart, Alcorso's story is our story, as he represents that which is best in Italian Australians: loyal to his native country but dedicated to his adopted one; frustrated by a lack of understanding, but grateful for the opportunities; determined to succeed but needy of the occasional shared warmth. In a very real sense his triumphs become our triumphs, his disappointments our disappointments, his assimilation our assimilation and his powerful humanity becomes our humanity.

Claudio Alcorso was born in Rome in 1913. His was a safe, secure world, underpinned by the love of his immediate family, including an older sister and two younger brothers as well as his Nonna Amalia and his devoted aunts and uncles. They lived next to each other in two large interconnected apartments that constituted the whole fourth floor of their building. Sharing these large apartments with the two families was an entourage of cooks and maids who had been with the family for many long years and the children's French governess.

Alcorso experienced his first deep sorrow with the death of his eight-year-old brother Franco, from poliomyelitis. His informal training was at the hands of his French governess, Mademoiselle Lupi who ensured that his French was as fluent as his Italian and almost as natural. They accomplished this through his consistent exposure to great French literature, his favourite authors being Emile Zola, André Gide, Romain Rolland, Anatole France, Georges Duhamel, Alexandre Dumas père and fils and later the poets Valéry, Baudelaire, Verlaine, Mallarmé, and Apollinaire. That he was reading more French literature than Italian at

this point in his development does not appear to have been too unusual in his circles, due to the general dominance of French culture bordering on hegemony. He later became fluent in English, German and in Australia learned a fair amount of Russian.

His appreciation of the visual arts was entrusted to Prof. Cervelli, a visual arts specialist, who recommended a practical course of art criticism consisting mainly of visiting churches and museums, where in spite of his apparent lack of interest he learned “that one stroke of the brush, when applied by a master gives life to matter” [Alcorso 94:41].

His formal education took place at the University of Rome, where he earned a degree in economics, followed by further study at the London School of Economics and Harvard School of Business Administration. During his university years he joined his father’s textile business, continuing his cultural education by visiting art shows, the theatre, the opera and concerts. On Sunday nights he frequented open house gatherings at the home of a prominent lawyer who followed the tradition of the fashionable French and Italian salons of the nineteenth century. Here, speakers addressed current issues from literature, theatre, historical themes and more contemporary ones such as Freud’s Psychoanalysis, and Einstein’s Theory of Relativity. These were the social circles which provided the young Alcorso with stimulation and friendships and which would later influence his world-view, politically and intellectually. Here he met Enzo Soroni and Lidia Mazzolani, both children of deposed parliamentarians who were by now openly hostile to the Fascist regime. Here he also met Sergio Fenoaltea and through him Giorgio Amendola, the latter a brilliant man who would prove a significant influence in Alcorso’s life. But Alcorso’s most important lessons were learned from his family. It was from them that he inherited and accepted the philosophy of work, study, the need to read and according to him an “almost religious respect for the arts - values that became as natural as the air I breathed” [Alcorso 94:40]. From his family he also learned respect for everybody but specifically for the virtue of the young women in his circle. He elaborates in the following: “they were attractive...but we knew that they had to remain virgins until their wedding day” [Alcorso 94: 45].

Upon graduation, he was drafted for his compulsory military service and since he already held a civilian pilot’s license, the Air Force was eager to recruit him. His university degree qualified him to enlist as an officer ensuring him the rank of sub-lieutenant.

He regarded these as some of the happiest days of his life, carefree days: a time dedicated to improving one’s flying skills and to enjoying

life. It was however, the calm before the storm and soon the under-prepared squadron was put on war-alert. Mussolini wanted to ensure a victory for General Franco in the Spanish Civil War, but a brief check of ten of the twelve planes in the squadron revealed that only four were in working order. Given that this was not a unique situation, many of the officers drew the conclusion that they were ruled by a bunch of buffoons.

Alcorso began to question many aspects of Italian military and political life and his deeply felt anti-fascist views helped to develop in him a general sense of fierce independence. In the end it was probably the spate of anti-Semitic articles appearing in newspapers and magazines, which really crystallized his thinking. Up to this point, Italians of the Jewish religion had participated in the nation's political life by becoming senators and members of parliament, university professors, professional men and career officers in the armed forces. Now the regime founded a monthly magazine called *La Razza* (The Race), which asserted that Italians of Jewish descent did not belong to the Italian race. In spite of these anti-Semitic sentiments no restrictive measures were taken, resulting in the belief among members of the Italian Jewish community that these measures were only designed to appease Hitler. These then were the developments which ultimately decided Alcorso to leave not only Italy but Europe in general "in search of" a country where he could build a new life, and where freedom of the individual would be an inalienable right" [Alcorso 94: 52-53]. His decision was also motivated by the need to achieve for himself rather than remain "an appendix to his father's business" [Alcorso 94:50].

He decided on Australia, but he would go there via London where he would undertake post-graduate studies and research his prospects in Australia. A personal contact with Professor Robins, Chair of Economics at the University of London, ensured his acceptance at the London School of Economics. In London he continued his research on Australia, whilst also becoming involved with the Student body which was both multicultural and characterised by lively intellectual debate. He contrasted the ferment, the heated discussions, the claims for independence, especially by the Indian students, and the vehement and unanimous opposition to Nazism and Fascism with the tame, dull, and sceptical atmosphere of his own university in Rome. Alcorso claims that it was the stimulating contact with the student body rather than the formal lectures which made it significant. This time also saw the uprising of the minority German Sudeten in Czechoslovakia which later gave Hitler the opportunity to invade. As war seemed inevitable,

Alcorso decided to offer his services to fight the Nazis; he could not have foreseen that years later, an Australian Crown Prosecutor would refer to this as the action of “a soldier of fortune” [Alcorso 94:55].

Meanwhile his research into his future Australian business revealed that Australia had the highest per capita consumption of printed fashion dresses in the world. The other discovery was the total absence of local production. “The paradox was puzzling till he realized that Australia was a British dominion and Britain was not very dominant in fashion”.

Alcorso experienced neither melancholy thoughts nor misgivings as his ship, the *Strathallen*, sailed towards Australia. His youthful confidence and the opportunity to create an enterprise of his own animated him. He later recalled the journey as an enjoyable interval punctuated by the significant meeting with Pamela Hore-Ruthven and her new husband Patrick Gowrie. He later learned that the fiery tempered dark-haired man, more reminiscent of an Italian artist than the prototype Englishman, was the Governor General’s son. This was a relationship that would stand the test of time.

When, finally, the *Strathallen* sailed into Sydney harbour, Alcorso was overwhelmed by the natural beauty of the landscape. Below he describes his first impression:

I remember that our ship entered the harbour just after dawn that February in dreamtime, slowly moving past the sheer cliffs of the heads, to reveal the sight of the marvellous harbour...the city was enfolded in slight haze, adding to the sense of beauty, mystery and promise. It was a case of love at first sight. Sydney, extending all around the harbour, seemed one of the most beautiful cities in the world; living there would be an exhilarating challenge. [Alcorso 94:35]

Alcorso took to Sydney with great passion. He rented a furnished apartment in Macleay Street and an office in York Street and quickly settled into developing his business. Alcorso’s continued enquiries confirmed that the lower-end of the market was supplied by Japan and that the better quality fabrics were imported from England and Europe. His information also revealed that it was not possible to repeat successful designs; by the time one placed a new order in England and had them shipped the season was over [Alcorso 94:56]. He knew now that his plan to establish a screen-printing factory here was right. This would be an enterprise of his own: his conception, his plans, his strategies, his implementation and not an extension of his father’s business.

By the time *Silk Textile Printers P/L* became operational (employing some fifty people), it was approaching the end of 1939. As part of his

market research, Alcorso obtained samples of the best selling fabrics. An excursion to Bondi beach however, convinced him that his vision of fabrics for these long limbed, bronzed women was very different. He envisioned them “wearing bold, gay patterns and colours” [Alcorso 94.63], and this strategy proved an early success.

It was not until he tried to introduce bolder and more colourful designs, which he believed to be more appropriate for the Australian persona and more in harmony with the Australian environment that he realised:

How deeply English tradition and habits had conditioned Australian attitudes. I had not realised that since the arrival of the First Fleet, Australia had been closed to the influence of all cultures except British, or, more accurately, that ‘foreign’ influences could reach Australia only through the British filter. The conformism I encountered in dressing was mirrored in habits of eating and in the design of buildings. English lifestyle was the model. Nobody queried whether the model was suitable for a sundrenched land, or for human beings living along warm ocean beaches. [Alcorso 1994:63]

Business was good and there was time for play as well as work; Alcorso’s new Australian life was indeed rewarding. There were no pangs, no regrets: Australia was a good home. He did however miss his native crusty, crisp bread and his strong bitter Italian espresso coffee - “a minor deprivation in exchange for the fullness of one’s life” [Alcorso 1994: 68].

Alcorso had made many acquaintances but among his handful of elite friends, he could count Patrick Gowrie, the Governor General’s son and his wife Pamela, Tom Schurmann, Consul General for the Netherlands and his wife Michelle. His business friends included Vinton Smith, a Melbourne stockbroker, and Frank Beaurepaire, a former Olympic swimmer and now Lord Mayor of Melbourne. The latter two were the first Australian members of Alcorso’s Board. Vinton was also responsible for securing a personal interview with Prime Minister Menzies.

The only puzzlement was that in all his wide ranging discussions with his Australian friends and acquaintances, there were no references to Australian artists either with respect to their contribution towards developing national identity or recognition for their contribution in enriching the nation’s quality of life.

Life was good but stormy weather lay ahead: War, which had been threatening for some time, suddenly became a reality. Alcorso offered his services to the Australian Airforce, giving details of his qualifications

in an interview with Wing Commander Wilson. It was not enough however and on 4 July 1940, Alcorso was arrested and taken to Long Bay, which had become a transit depot for enemy alien internees. So began three and a half years of bitter confinement, which led Alcorso to believe that “a dogmatic mentality was not the sole prerogative of German and Italian Fascists” [Alcorso 1994:70]. At Long Bay he was met by rows of iron doors:

When my cell’s door clanked and the key turned in the lock, I sat on the cot bewildered by revulsion. I had seen this type of gaol in American movies. The vision of people condemned to spend years inside these cells was too desperate to contemplate. [Alcorso 94:5]

That evening he determined not to eat the revolting looking stew, but when he reached out for a slice of bread the immediate and severe slap from one of the guards drove home the message that he was no longer in control of his life. The next day he was led to an internal courtyard where many members of Sydney’s Italian community were gathered. The silence emanating from the disparate group only served to create an immensely intense and saddened atmosphere. These were the helpless victims of the war. Unlike the Fascist leaders and people in some official positions who had been arrested three weeks earlier, they knew nothing about politics nor did they care. Their only concerns were their wives, their children and their work:

Most had migrated to Australia to try to evade the class bondage into which they were born. Emigration had been their dream for a better future, if not for them, for their children. Fascism, democracy, rights of the individual, were all abstractions belonging to the world of the padroni. The war had nothing to do with them; it was a disaster thrust upon them by the padroni, Italian and Australian. [Alcorso 94:6]

This solemn atmosphere was sometimes broken by the antics of people like ‘Spaghetti Joe’, a former wharfie with a flair for comedy. He was apparently a natural actor who managed to raise a smile and everybody’s spirits.

Soon Alcorso was visited by Michelle Schuurman who brought books, food and a message of friendship from her husband Tom. Alcorso went to the visiting room unshaven, feeling angry and betrayed. Michelle helped him to gain a better perspective of the situation that transcended his personal hurt whilst at the same time offering some hope.

One particular Sunday when all the families came to visit their loved ones, he was approached by a German inmate named Staehli. He had seemed like a civilized man, but now observing all the swarthy, dark,

curly haired Sicilians gesticulating with their wives he turned to Alcorso and whispered, "you do have a racial problem in Southern Italy". Alcorso's reply ensured that there would be no repeat of the episode. He pointed to the fact that "Southern Italy had produced great doctors, lawyers, playwrights and statesmen. We Italians thought it was the product of the mind that counted, not blue eyes and fair hair" [Alcorso 1994:10].

Two months later the prisoners were transferred to Hay, a brand new camp in western New South Wales built for 2000 people. The huts were part of a concentric design, housing 30 people in each. In Hay, the authorities asked Prince Alfonso Del Drago, a well-known name in Italian nobility, to assume internal control. The authorities regarded Del Drago as the most senior Italian internee in the camp, both in age and rank. The Prince had fought against the Austrians and the Germans during the First World War: twice decorated, he had earned the rank of Major. Nobody knew Del Drago's real story, but rumour had it that he had been exiled because of problems with women and gambling debts. He had apparently had a well-known love affair with a certain widow, the Baroness Avanzo. When the lady transferred her affections to another gentleman, Del Drago had challenged him to a duel. Now 57, white-haired, portly and sporting a Van Eyck beard, he found himself in charge of the internment camp at Hay. One evening, during a game of bridge with Alcorso (with whom he had struck a good friendship), he excused himself to go to the lavatory. He staggered back presently with blood streaming from a deep wound. Somebody had laid in wait for him. The culprit was never discovered, but rumours in the camp attributed the attack to a disillusioned Fascist fanatic who was dissatisfied with his neutral political stance. It was not the last act of violence to take place at Hay.

Confinement leads to familiarity and better knowledge of your fellow inmates. Everyone gets to know everybody else, and the more reflective observers of life learn much about themselves and about their neighbour's inner strengths and resources. Alcorso was one of these observers who was also equipped with natural analytical powers enhanced by elite training and education. He would soon get to know all of his fellow internees, which part of Italy they came from, their background, what families they had, their occupation and political point of view. His observations have yielded little cameos of many of these interesting and in some cases, unfortunate characters. People like Phil Bassone, a big strong metal worker who represented his union on the Trades Hall Council, and whose competitive nature drove him to win at

any cost. He drove himself mercilessly to beat all the experienced vegetable gardeners in an in-camp competition designed to ascertain the best vegetable grower. Bassone managed to unsettle Alcorso with his aggressive, non-compromising Marxist philosophy. He believed that the working class should obtain control of all means of production and distribution. Italo Rossi was the complete opposite to Bassone. His only crime had been to join the Italian Chamber of Commerce, an innocent enough decision given that he was both a manufacturer and an importer of Borsalino hats. He was interned for ten months, the only compensation being the beginning of a life long friendship with Alcorso. The other fateful meeting for Alcorso was his introduction to Ned Zavattaro who would, following his eventual release, become his father-in-law. These interesting characters and relationships made his three and a half-year sentence a little more bearable, but they were no compensation for the deprivation of a man's freedom.

In February 1941, Maestro Arturo Toscanini, then the world's greatest conductor and a long-time personal friend of the Alcorso family, determined to intervene on Alcorso's behalf. He sent an affidavit from New York, where he had exiled himself after refusing to conduct the Fascist Anthem at an official function. Toscanini vowed not to return or conduct in Italy as long as the Fascists were in power, a promise he kept. His credentials as an anti-Fascist were unimpeachable. The Maestro vouchsafed for Alcorso. Toscanini refers to the family's anti-Fascist stance and the fact that that in large part was the reason why Alcorso had transferred to Australia. He considers Alcorso as high-minded and a man fit to become an honoured citizen of his adopted country. Toscanini's affidavit was followed by a letter from Prof. Max Ascoli, President of New York's anti-Fascist Mazzini Society. The Professor too was eager to guarantee Alcorso's bona fides. "In 1943 Commander Randolfo Pacciardi, then in the process of raising a free Italian Legion", also tried to intervene for Alcorso [Alcorso 94: 22-23].

All the entreaties from both prominent Italian and Australian citizens proved of no avail: Alcorso remained in prison. He would eventually win his freedom but not till after the fall of Mussolini and his Fascist party. Freedom presented new problems for Alcorso. He had now lost the friendships of many people he had grown to love and with them went the sense of security which came from their collective common experience. With his pre-war self-confidence destroyed and his optimism long since vanished, Alcorso was obliged to deal with what he now considered, a hostile world. He was number 9221, his internment number, which was deeply embedded into his soul. His psychology and

therefore his perception had been permanently changed. In Sydney it was no longer the magnificent natural harbour that concentrated his mind, but rather the motley and ugly city buildings which he now saw as man's less than mediocre contribution to this ancient and beautiful land. He contrasted this with his native Rome, where "the contribution of man rather than nature had given the city its unique quality" [Alcorso 1994: 35]. Some twenty years later, Donald Horne drew the same conclusion when he wrote that "Australia is a lucky country run mainly by second rate people who share its luck" [Horne 1964: 220].

Perhaps the last word of this whole sorry saga should go to someone who lived through the ordeal. This was Alcorso's reaction to the reading of his file many years after the events:

I found evidence of more than malice. I found ignorance and incompetence mixed with racist prejudice and compounded by the long held belief often enunciated by senior intelligence officers: if I had my way all Italians would be interned. Three and a half years of confinement made me understand that a dogmatic mentality was not the sole prerogative of German and Italian Fascists. [Alcorso 94:21&70]

In the months that followed Alcorso lived a miserable and forlorn existence. When he presented his papers from the military to the police, he was told to report to the police station once a week. He thought about returning to Italy and joining one of the Italian units fighting with the Allies, but how would he arrange that without drawing attention to himself? He was convinced that the Authorities were seeking an excuse to either banish him to Central Australia or reintern him; he was afraid. "I was cowed and terrified of drawing attention to myself, I wanted to disappear" [Alcorso 94:71].

He finally found courage to go to his factory, but that too was depressing. He was grateful to his manager Mr Hearnshaw for keeping the factory limping along but the work was primitive and badly done, mistakes were common. All his young well-trained printers had been seconded to essential work. They were replaced by unskilled women all over forty and much more difficult to train.

One of his fellow internees, Ned Zavattaro was also trying to rebuild his life with his family when Alcorso decided to visit him at his Double Bay fruitshop. It was an affectionate reunion and the friends were soon dining with Ned's family: his wife Letitia, his daughter Diana and son Walter. It was good to be involved with a family again; it helped him forget his alienation.

It was in Ned's fruit shop that he met Tom Saviane who was then trying to establish a branch of Italia Libera in Sydney. Omero Schiase, a

socialist lawyer, had established *Italia libera* in Melbourne. Originally from Bologna, Schiasso was a handsome lean man in his mid fifties with blue eyes and a ready smile. He and Alcorso hit it off rather well and when it was decided that the way to get the *Italia Libera* message across to the Italians was to publish their own newspaper, *Il Risveglio*, Alcorso became its first editor.

A few weeks later he asked Diana Zavattaro to marry him, a decision driven more by the need to belong than by love. They had two sons Julian and Adrian and while the boys brought much happiness the marriage had not been grounded on the right emotions and proved unsuccessful. But the greatest tragedy was still in store for the couple. It was the premature death of their son Adrian who was killed in a motor vehicle accident.

By early 1946 his business was returning to normal and Alcorso was keen to introduce new designs by the best known Australian artists such as Dobell, Drysdale, Preston and Feint. There were no restrictions on the designs and the fabrics were used for dresses and curtains. The artist would have approval of the master sketch and his name would be acknowledged in the print [Alcorso 94:79-80].

Unfortunately the artist's range as it came to be known was only a partial success. It was felt that many of the designs were really far ahead of their time. The only design that achieved success was a rather conventional one called *Foliage* by Adrian Feint [Alcorso 1984:87].

He made the decision to visit Italy and reacquaint himself with family and friends. He had not been back since migrating to Australia and so much had happened not only to him, but also to his beloved native land.

Many of his friends thought that he had returned permanently; others thought that he had settled in Australia and was merely visiting his homeland. He reignited some of his youthful relationships and enjoyed many activities with his friends but he also became disillusioned with his class, because, notwithstanding the horrors of war, his circle was returning towards liberal conservatism. It was a world he had questioned even as a well-loved member of that elite club, but now especially after his experience in the internment camp, he realised how affected he had become by the Australian social democratic and egalitarian system of society.

All the trip did was to reinforce his conviction, that Australia would remain his home.

During 1947, the decision was made to transfer the whole textile enterprise to Tasmania. For sometime Alcorso had wanted to expand the

operation and was seeking new premises. When the Tasmanian Government offered to facilitate a loan for the purchase of a defunct ammunitions factory, the offer proved too tempting. So successful was the move, that the business became an attractive take-over target for an international conglomerate, Dunlop Australia. Alcorso did not oppose the take-over, they paid a good price for it, and he thought that the backing of an international company may ensure more adventurous work. The opposite proved to be the case and he soon found that much of the pleasure he had derived from building his company had vanished [Alcorso 94:78&90]. Still the move to Tasmania had been completely successful not only with respect to business, but also in terms of his private life. He had built his home there and he had met and married Lesley who proved to be his enduring life's companion.

In 1954 Nugget Coombs, Governor of the Commonwealth Bank and Chairman of the Reserve Bank made a very serious contribution to Australian culture by persuading Prime Minister Menzies to create the Elizabethan Theatre Trust. Menzies, who was an unashamed Anglophile, could only be persuaded on the grounds that it would be a wonderful tribute to the young Queen Elizabeth; he seemed less concerned with the benefits to Australian culture [Alomes 1988-168].

The Elizabethan Theatre Trust did however, for the first time in Australian history, create opportunities for Australians to become involved in a major arts organisation. Alcorso was one such Australian and the only one of Italian heritage. He became a member of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust under the chairmanship of Nugget Coombs. When 14 years later the Federal Government established the Australia Council, Dr Coombs was the obvious person to chair the new body. He was a man of foresight combined with a predisposition to action. He knew that strong creative arts companies could not flourish without a large measure of autonomy. He acted upon his resolve to extricate the opera and ballet from the trust's control, then wrote to Alcorso in Hobart and asked him to become Chairman of the Opera Company and supervise its conversion to an autonomous body. A week later when Nugget rang him for his reply, Alcorso gave him an affirmative answer: thus began a new and arguably the most important phase of his career [Alcorso 1994:111].

Alcorso had been involved with the arts all his life. His parents, his class, his education had taught him a reverence for the arts bordering on religion. In Australia he had conceived and created the Artist's Collection and had been involved as a board member with the Elizabethan Trust for fourteen years. He had watched the former tram

depot at Bennelong Point slowly being converted into the Sydney Opera House, a process he compared to “an almost miraculous event: an accomplishment so outstanding or unusual as to seem beyond human capability” [Alcorso 1994: 110]. This was in sharp contrast with what he had previously described as man’s less than mediocre contribution.

He had followed the bitter debate which accompanied the construction of this unique building, and had realised that it was as always concentrated on economics. Alcorso noted that:

The unquantifiable, measurable ingredients which make the essence of life, were seldom mentioned. It is worth remembering that the editorial writers supporting or opposing building that Opera House at Bennelong Point never dared to suppose that Utzon’s innovative, unorthodox concept would capture the hearts of the people of Sydney and then become symbolic of the nation. Sheep, koalas and tennis players - until then emblematic of the nation - were displaced by the outline of a building dedicated to the arts. [Alcorso 94:110]

He felt passionately about the new Opera House and the development of the Australian Opera Company. He often went to the site to admire, to inspect, but above all else to remind himself of his good fortune and responsibility. Life had bestowed upon him the supreme privilege of being involved with one of the most beautiful buildings of the twentieth century and the responsibility to ensure that the Australian Opera of which he was the Chairman, would prove itself worthy through “the excellence of its performances” [Alcorso 94:111].

Moffat Oxenbould, Artistic director Opera Australia, suggests that:

Alcorso had a vivid personality; it was just right for his breadth of vision to be an inspirational force. He was able to convey that blend of excitement and apprehension whenever he reminded us that the eyes of the world would be upon us for the opening of the Sydney Opera House. His romantic nature made him fall in love with the company. The early mornings and late evenings were special because the mornings were anticipatory and the evenings more reflective. He brought a broader international view that was perfect for the time. He had the foresight and vision to see what could happen to opera not only locally, but also internationally. [Moffatt Oxenbould 2000:1]

Nugget Coombs had steered through the Board the resolution guaranteeing autonomy to The Australian Opera, but the subsidies from the Australia Council and the State Government were insufficient to cover the salaries of the people employed. Alcorso’s formula for the road ahead was one he had learned from his father: **QUALITY SELLS**. The objective was to raise the standards of the performance and box office

returns would follow. Notwithstanding the self-evident wisdom of the strategy, the fact was that there was literally no room to manoeuvre; one mistake and it would be the end.

Alcorso approached Sir Ian Potter, who had succeeded Nugget in the Chairmanship of the Trust. Sir Ian had a very clear and creative approach to financial problems and they returned to Nugget Coombs with a proposal: the Council should make yearly grants to the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust for the purpose of establishing a 'Residual Responsibility Fund' [Alcorso 1994: 113]. The grants would stop once the fund reached an adequate level capable of covering justifiable losses by the Opera of the Ballet.

Now Alcorso turned his mind to creating a board with the requisite skills to ensure the development of the company. Board member, Sheila Scotter, suggested an approach to Lord Harwood, an accepted authority on opera with impeccable qualifications who, to everyone's surprise, accepted. It was Lord Harwood who enticed Edward Downes to come to Australia as musical director of the company. Ted Downes certainly advanced the musical standard of the company and Lord Harwood delivered all that Alcorso had hoped for and more [Alcorso 1994: 113].

Alcorso had offered the position of musical director to Carlo Felice Cillario, who had come to Australia for the 1968-70 seasons and had made a significant impact on the quality of orchestral playing and overall musical preparation. Cillario was, according to Alcorso [1994:115], not only a first rate international conductor but was also characterised by "a warm heart, the soul of a poet and the enthusiasm of a young man." Only four years before arriving in Australia he was responsible for the musical direction of perhaps the most famous opera season in history, the final performances of *Tosca* to be sung by Maria Callas with Tito Gobbi at Covent Garden. He would later conduct Gobbi in Australia in *Tosca* and *Falstaff* and later still would commit to disc a remarkable *Norma* with Montserrat Caballe and Placido Domingo. This was the man that Alcorso wanted as his musical director, but much as Cillario loved Australia and kept returning regularly, he could not abandon his European career. This was a situation that would be repeated when Alcorso went seeking a new general manager to replace Donald McDonald: the very best liked to visit Australia but not to stay. For now, Lord Harwood came to the rescue and enticed Edward Downes to take on the position of Musical Director of the Australian Opera, charged with the task of elevating standards.

It was at this time that Alcorso also agreed to a salary increase for the chorus who would now be paid at the same level as lower paid skilled

workers in other trades. His rationale was that “we could not build the workers in Australia by calling upon the artists to be the major subsidisers” [Alcorso 94:114]. In addition he began the task of enticing some major Australian talent from their European careers, artists such as John Shaw, Robert Alman, Donald Smith, Elizabeth Fretwell, Ronald Dowd and Robert Simmons. All were happy to return.

The longer Alcorso worked at the opera the more he came to appreciate the artists’ dedication and struggle to promote their art. When, after the unfortunate departure of Donald McDonald his General Manager, he became the caretaker Managing Director till John Winther could come over from the Netherlands to take over the position, Alcorso more and more came to appreciate the sentence he had read in a book as a boy: “The artist is always right”. He now understood what the author really meant, which was that the artist is always right because he is motivated by the desire to promote his art. “Artists seldom have to discipline themselves to work hard: they want to do it” [Alcorso 94: 126]. Artists were generous, dedicated and hardworking but they were also flawed with human weaknesses. It would be up to the non-artist to show understanding, tolerance and to make allowances [Alcorso 94:117].

As the Opera House neared completion, Alcorso became apprehensive. He knew that the eyes of the world would be on the Australian Opera for the gala opening of this unique building. He knew also that opera is a total experience and that if any of the critical elements - orchestra, voices, acting, costumes, scenery and lighting are under par, they have the potential to break the magical spell that great opera performances can cast over their audiences.

He knew too that with a company that was chronically under-funded it was just a question of time before under par performances would result. He determined to tackle the problem head on by inviting the Prime Minister William McMahon and his wife Sonia to a performance of Verdi’s Nabucco followed by supper after the show. Fate took a hand and Donald Shanks who was singing Zacharia contracted laryngitis for the opening night performance. There was no real substitute for him so it was decided that Shanks would mime the role while a chorister sang it from the side of the proscenium. The result according to Alcorso was “pathetic” [Alcorso 94:119].

That evening at supper with Sir Ian and Lady Primrose Potter in support, he tackled the Prime Minister:

Mr McMahon, within eighteen months we shall open the Sydney Opera House. All the world’s critics will be there. The attention of the

world will focus on us, as this unique building has captured the imagination of millions. Should something happen, similar to what happened tonight, the world would not laugh at me, it would laugh at you, the Prime Minister of Australia. His answer was immediate: 'Come to see me tomorrow morning at nine o'clock, at my office at the Commonwealth Bank [Alcorso 94:119].

The following morning he went to Mr McMahon's office, where he argued his case and ten minutes later the Prime Minister had agreed to double the Australian Opera's subsidy. Jean Battersby, from the Australia Council, agrees that the opera was dreadfully under-funded at that time. She continues:

Alcorso was absolutely relentless in his promotion of the Opera Company. He loved the Opera, and was tenacious and single minded in his pursuit of resources that would ensure its appropriate development. He gave of himself generously: he gave his time, his energy and even his money. [Battersby, August 2000].

Alcorso knew that he needed to schedule new and exciting productions for the opening season. In spite of the doubling of the subsidy and the expected revenue from full houses, when these new productions had been costed, even allowing for revenue from capacity houses, the budget was short by half a million dollars.

As Alcorso could not go back to the Government, he had to find the money elsewhere. He called on Tristan Antico, another Italian Australian and head of Pioneer Concrete, whose family had migrated from the Trentino region of Italy when he was only seven. Alcorso proposed that he sponsor a production of Puccini's *Trittico*. Half an hour later he walked out of his office with a cheque for \$55,000. He then visited Peter Abeles, head of TNT who had migrated to Australia from Hungary shortly after the Second World War. He and his wife loved Wagner's music; Alcorso offered to produce Wagner's *Tannhauser* or *The Flying Dutchman* on condition that he would sponsor the production. Minutes later, he walked out of his office with a cheque for \$70,000. His next port of call was Bill Tyree, a New Zealander who was head of a progressive engineering company. Alcorso talked him into sponsoring a special production of Mozart's *Magic Flute* featuring Australian animals. It was scheduled for the night when Queen Elizabeth would officially open the Opera Theatre: Tyree contributed \$35,000. Stephen Hall, the Artistic Director, had a good contact at Amatil, the company controlling some large cigarette brands. Tobacco advertising on television was prohibited but sponsorship would enable Benson & Hedges to enhance its corporate reputation by contributing \$90,000 to a

production of Prokofiev's *War and Peace*. In a short period, Alcorso had managed to appeal to the better nature of Australia's captains of industry. The Australian Opera was now well on its way. Moffatt Oxenbould, believes that:

"Alcorso was innovative in the way he approached commercial sponsorship at a time when that concept was not widely practiced in Australia and his approach has been used as an example for future sponsorship raising, so it was quite ground breaking. It was more philanthropic than it is today where companies are always asking what we can do for them". [Moffatt Oxenbould 2000:1]

The first season was a great success. The company played to capacity houses throughout the season, the critics on the whole were generous, and the tourists from all over the world were thrilled with the Opera House and somewhat surprised at the standard of the performances. Everyone involved with the company worked very hard towards this success and none, according to Alcorso, harder than Ted Downes the Musical Director. There was no question that he had managed to lift the musical standards of the company to a very high level indeed.

Alcorso now turned his attention to the second season. Most of the good expatriate Australian singers had returned home to sing with the Australian Opera, with one notable omission. Joan Sutherland, one of the greatest voices of the twentieth century was Australian by birth but international by profession. She had been back in Australia in 1965 for the Williamson/Sutherland season: the last truly international and privately funded opera season. Although parts of the Australian press had not been kind, the public recognised her as one of the greatest Divas of her time.

Alcorso made an informal approach to her through John Hopkins, Director of the Conservatorium in Melbourne. Sutherland was offered an opera of her choice and she selected Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffman* for her Australian Opera debut. Her feat was to sing all four leading roles perfectly, while acting each role humorously and convincingly. The audiences loved her and she loved being back home, in spite of some controversy about her fees which were dictated by international demand on her services. The fact that the Sydney Opera House, for all its external beauty, lacked the economy of scale to pay big fees for international artists was not a problem of Sutherland's making.

As part of the second season at the new house, Alcorso managed to stage a truly Australian opera, Sculthorpe's *Rites of Passage*. That, plus the Sutherland return was enough to ensure another significant season.

Alcorso reigned over another two successful seasons at the Sydney Opera House and after six years at the helm and approaching his sixty-first year he decided that he had done what he could. He remains humble about his contribution to the arts and his achievement in general.

I resigned in July 1974. The company made me a life member and gave me, as a parting present, the sketches by Tom Lingwood for the scenes of War and Peace. I gratefully accepted. I had done what I could but I had received more from the generous and talented people in the company than I had been able to give. Through them, and through the privilege of sharing in the opening of the Sydney Opera House, my new country had given me ample compensation for the bitter years of wartime internment [Alcorso 94:127].

Claudio Alcorso has experienced the full extent of life's peaks and troughs: from an elite background to an internee, from a newspaper editor through to innovative textile designer and finally the great prize of being the foundation Chairman of the Australian Opera and presiding over the opening of the Sydney Opera House. It had all been a great adventure, a great life. He returned to his wife Lesley in Tasmania becoming a winemaker at Moorilla Estate, fighting the conservationist cause and spending valuable time with his children and grandchildren. Whatever the role, it is fair to say that Claudio Alcorso has remained engaged with life and its passions throughout. In the process he has served his adopted country with distinction and brought enormous pride to his native country. His contribution marks him as a truly great Italian Australian.

INTERVIEWS

Moffatt Oxenbould, Artistic Director, Opera Australia, August 2000.

Jean Battersby, Former CEO, Australia Council, August 2000.

Lady Primrose Potter, August 2000.

Dr Gianni Bardini, Italian Consul General for Melbourne, October 1999.

Language Experience: the Forgotten Dimension on Cross-Cultural Social Work?

Nora Ruzzene

Introduction

In Australia we have a society which is unambiguously, culturally and linguistically diverse. Fifteen percent (ABS 1993) of the Australian population, over five years of age, speak a language other than English at home, (this does not include the many indigenous languages). If we give due consideration to this arena of diversity then it is inevitable that social workers in their daily practice provide a service to those who are not of the same culture and/or whose native or first language is not English. Language can be considered as one of the essential ingredients in our society. Hernandez-Chavez (1988, p.45) succinctly expresses this importance:

“On a cultural level, language is the symbolic expression of community, encoding a group’s values, its folkways and its history. Socially, it is the most powerful means of interaction and communication and it is through language that an individual or a group seeks and attains participation in society”

Although English is recognised in Australia as the national language, all languages play a critical symbolic, cultural and social role within their respective linguistic groups. Social work education and practice needs therefore, to consider this critical role of language.

Cross Cultural Social Work

Within cross cultural social work literature, two different, though not mutually exclusive themes are evident. Firstly, what I refer to as subjective awareness and understanding. This relates to the understanding of, for example, one’s ethnicity and culture. Examples include; *Inclusionary Cultural Model* (Nakanishi and Rittner 1992); *Ethnic Self Profiling* (Chau 1990); awareness of one’s own biases or ‘isms’ (Latting 1990); (see also Fook 1993; Devore and Schlesinger 1987; Compton and Galaway 1984). The second theme relates to objective awareness and understanding, that is, understanding the individual within the broader social and political environment. A good example of

objective awareness includes Devore and Schlesinger's model of 'ethnic reality' or 'ethclass in action' (1987, p.5). This model describes ethnic reality as the interaction of social class (occupation, education) and ethnicity (race, religion, national origin), (see also Chau 1990; Sue and Sue 1990; Green 1982; Norton 1978). Within these two significant themes, and not necessarily exclusive of them, there is a component which I believe has been given minimal attention and that is the understanding and exploration of the language experience of a person whose first language is not English. The understanding of this language experience can be assisted through understanding the process of culture.

Even though social work has become more aware of the client's culture, it is important to note that clients may not necessarily be aware of their cultural context. Culture is understood as being "absorbed in the process of socialization and strengthened and amplified in the course of life long incidental learning" (Draguns 1989, p.3). In addition to this enculturation process, the client also experiences acculturation. This is "a multidimensional and multidirectional process whereby ethnic minorities learn, incorporate, and integrate both the overt and covert cultural characteristics of the dominant culture" (Baron 1991, p.175). In discussing this cultural experience, one needs to acknowledge that our society is not comprised solely of separate cultural groups. What occurs is that groups tend to share and in time incorporate some common values and norms (de Anda 1984, p.102). The level of commonality is influenced by many factors, such as the similarity or difference to the dominant group. Perhaps a good premise for social workers is a recognition that practice is always cross cultural. At one end of the continuum is the closest cultural fit between the social worker and the client(s); at the other end is the greatest cultural difference between the social worker and client(s).

Language: So What?

Whilst it is not unusual for social work to acknowledge the cross culture nature of its practice, it has not addressed or explored cross lingual practice except in a limited way, for example, working with professional interpreters, being aware of different non verbal cues etc.

In cross cultural practice, it is quite clear when a worker and client do not speak the same language. For example, if the social worker only speaks English and the client only speaks Italian, both persons are aware that neither speaks the other's language. It is in these situations that language difference is evident and obvious solutions are applied, for example, one works with interpreters. However, this cross linguistic

practice is less evident when the practitioner and client speak English fluently or sufficiently. Even though the language of communication is English one cannot assume that the client has not experienced a culturally and socially diverse 'world view' (Sotomayor 1977) through a non English language, which is their 'mother tongue' or 'first language'. Skutnabb-Kangas captures the experience of bilinguals when she states:

"[The second language] ... does not go as deep, it does not come as close to them, it does not affect them as strongly as the first. It feels more superficial, more 'stuck on', it does not awaken the same deep layers of the personality. One is more oneself in one's mother tongue." (1981, p.49)

Language, objectively, is a functional tool for communication and a means 'to act as a symbol of tradition, heritage and ethnicity' (Edwards 1977, p.262). Subjectively, it is intrinsically part of the person. This is best described by Scollon and Scollon in their discussion on discourse patterns between an English speaker and an Athabaskan, ("Amerindian language of North America", see *International Encyclopedia of Linguistics*, 1992) when they state that:

"Discourse patterns are very closely tied up with a person's personality and culture. [...] If we suggest change we have to be very aware that we are not only suggesting change in discourse patterns. We are suggesting change in a person's identity. If someone says that an English speaker should be less talkative, less self-assertive, less interested in the future, he is saying at the same time that he should become a different person. He is saying that he should identify less with his own culture and more with another." (1981, p.37)

The value placed on the language spoken is determined by many factors. In Australia, it is evident, that being fluent in English allows one access to the most significant and powerful institutions of our country, for example, judicial, economic, political, health and welfare. On the other hand knowing a community language, for example Italian, is not of prime importance. The community or minority language could be said to be of importance predominantly in the private sphere, for example, amongst friends and family, whereas English is essential in the public sphere. Therefore, the majority language, English and the minority language, Italian/dialect, do not have equal status within our society.

What occurs in this two language environment is that the 'domain' (Fasold 1984) determines the language spoken. This is clearly demonstrated by Bettoni's case study of an Italian family:

"Italian is for [the children] an oral tool only, used almost exclusively in the family context dealing with obvious topics and simple tasks,

involving face-to-face communication within a small group of intimates who share much of the pragmatic presuppositions about their universe and its social and motivational structure.” (1985, p.9)

Furthermore when speakers and hearers are not equally competent in the same language there develops a linguistic complex form of communication. An example is what Bernardi explains as the ‘duo-lingual’, which occurs when parents speak ‘in dialect or Italian to their children and the children answering in English’(1982, p.6). Another example is when English and dialect/Italian words/phrases are intermingled by the speaker. The difficulty with this inter lingual communication is clearly described in a survey conducted in Melbourne (cited in Rando) of second generation Italians in their early 20s:

“[All the subjects in the study] stated that they thought exclusively in English; Italian was used only in the domestic domain but never to the complete exclusion of English; they found extreme difficulty in using Italian to speak to their parents about their work or on abstract topics such as politics.” (1990, p.10)

In Australia, if a bilingual person does not consciously maintain and develop their first language or ‘mother tongue’, they risk the erosion of the primary language as their English fluency increases. The possible consequences of this erosion could be far reaching. Firstly, parents’ and children’s interactions may be limited because they do not share one common, comprehensive language. The parents, for example, may speak predominantly dialect/Italian and the children English. The ‘shared meanings’ within the family may become limited as the children experience a new world in English and its culture. This new experience cannot be fully communicated to the parents. Secondly, primary language erosion may affect the degree of connectedness the individual may have to their ethnic community.

Language can be understood as a thread, which webs through the transmission and development of culture and ethnic identity, and simultaneously it in itself changes through this process.

The Study

Background

Being a bicultural and bilingual Italo-Australian, I have been aware of different linguistic competence between parents and children. I had been aware among my “paesani” and acquaintances that parents communicated in their ‘mother tongue,’ for example, Italian/dialect and their children would respond in English. Furthermore, as a social

worker I noticed intergenerational difficulties which I believed were partly attributed to linguistic differences. There was no doubt that in this cross lingual exchange, some level of communication was taking place, however what topics could be discussed when both parties to the communication had limited linguistic skills? What were the implications for cultural identity and shared meanings? Do social workers in cross cultural practice take note of this form of communication? Do they consider this language experience in their practice? The MSW minor thesis gave me the opportunity to explore this language experience. In order to contain the study, it was decided to explore with social welfare practitioners their awareness and understanding of the language experience of Italo-Australians. It was anticipated that the findings and analysis would inform practice and contribute to the body of knowledge of social work. An imaginative version of this language experience could be 'Mary's':

"Mary was thinking about her conversation with her Anglo-Australian friend, Frances, earlier in the day. Frances spoke about the conflict and misunderstanding with her parents. Mary thought, they all speak English. How does she think I cope, when my parents speak Italian and I speak English?". (Ruzzene 1995, p.6)

Key informants

The 'key informants' (Layder 1993, p.41) were identified using the snowball sampling method (Monette, Sullivan and De Jong 1986, p.129) and were defined as social welfare practitioners. All were of Italian speaking backgrounds, with five being social workers and three welfare practitioners, with four currently using their linguistic skills in their workplace. Their welfare work experience ranged from being recent graduates to twenty-five years in the workforce, with seven being female and one male.

Data collection

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews (Layder 1993; Monette et al. 1986) which allowed discussion and the option for practitioners to discuss and explore further the identified linguistic experience. This method allowed new ideas to be discussed with the next informant, thereby gathering, developing and evolving ideas and themes throughout the study. However, two key topics were central to all the interviews. Firstly, the practitioners' awareness of the linguistic phenomenon and its implications, and secondly, how they responded to this phenomenon in their practice.

For the first five interviews (coded K1-K5) a general scenario was presented to initiate discussion and explore the topic:

We have a scenario where the children speak predominantly English with some dialect and the parents speak predominantly Italian/Dialect. What do you think are some of the implications of this cross language communication?

As the data was reviewed from this group of informants, it was clear they had some knowledge about the impact of language, however, information about their 'practice' was limited. For the second stage of data collection (coded I6-I8) case vignettes were considered a good social work tool to explicitly explore practice and language experience. The vignettes included the key issues identified by the first round of interviews (K1-K5) namely; intergenerational, cultural and rural background of parents. Secondly, they needed to include explicitly the implications of language differences between parents and children and the individual's experience of language. This second aspect had not been sufficiently developed in the first round of interviews.

Vignette 1: A 25 year old Italo-Australian, Celestina, comes in to see you.

Presenting Problem: She has on-going problems with her parents arguing about everything and feels that her parents are unsupportive.

She is employed as an accountant, but does not have any problems at work and recently moved into her own unit by getting a bank loan.

Celestina is the second eldest of a family of 4 children, but the eldest daughter. The family came to Australia 20 years ago from rural Italy. Both parents are working and in their mid 50s.

Vignette 2: A 35 year old woman, Fausta, comes in to see you. She is married with 2 children, aged 15 and 14. Her husband John works but Fausta is at home.

Her father, 75 years old, recently had a stroke, is severely paralysed, and needing a lot of care. Her mother, 72 years old, has some general health problems but overall is well. Her mother wants to care for her husband but it is clearly not possible. Fausta feels pressure from her elder sister and brother, who live in Italy, to take care of the parents.

Fausta has always had a cold relationship with her father and the thought of taking on a caring responsibility is too emotionally painful. She reveals to you that her father sexually abused her as a child but has never told her mother or family.

The family migrated from Italy 36 years ago, the elder siblings returned to live in Italy.

(The above vignettes are completely fictitious and were developed

purely for the purposes of this study).

Notes were taken during the interviews and at a later stage, key points were noted of the overall themes the interviewees stressed. Once all the interviews were conducted, key themes and topics were drawn together.

It was anticipated that if the key informants were sensitised in their practice to the language experience of Italo-Australians they would explore and comment on the implications of the experience of language of Celestina, Fausta and their families. It was thought that even if they did not link language and identity, they would in the very least note the possible difficulties of language difference between parents and children.

Findings And Analysis

Cross lingual communication

Key factors identified by the informants included the complexity of cross lingual communication, where three languages, standard Italian, dialect, and English, could all be used in one conversation. Furthermore, if the information discussed is too complex then 'details are often left out' (K4) or: "Instead of using a phrase, it turns out to be a paragraph in order to explain. The conversation is brought down to the lowest dominator (K3)".

An interesting discussion with one informant (K4) distinguished between content and effect of communication, referring to the latter as inclusive of non-verbal communication. It was thought that even if the words per se were limited, that the communication would still be 'emotionally laden'. This informant (K4) proposed that even if parents and children, did not understand what was verbally discussed there would be some understanding from the emotional underlay. Furthermore, the informant thought that the children even when conversing with English words would still have this emotional underlay. The communication was perceived as being 'charged with Italian emotions and gestures' (K4). This interesting observation could be similar to Gumperz's discussion on 'prosody', which includes intonation, loudness and stress (comprising of 'pitch, loudness and duration') in conversations (1982, p.100). Is it possible that the 'words' are in English but the 'prosody' is Italian? 'Cultural bound vocabulary' (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981) was identified by key informants, with one stating (I6):

" 'L'onore della famiglia', even if we translate it, the word 'honour' loses the significance, which it signifies within the Italian culture."

Language incorporates the transmission of information and also the transmission of culture. It changes and evolves, incorporating new ideas, new experiences. However with the Italo-Australian experience:

“Oral history loses out because the kids don’t understand Italian and the parents can’t speak much English (K1). Stories aren’t passed on, only passed on in a condensed manner (K5).”

Power of English

One informant (K4) noted that children might be ashamed that their parents could not speak English and react to this by working very hard to learn English. The extreme reaction of being ashamed of their parents, this informant (K4) suggested, is the children’s denial of their Italian background. On the other hand, the parents may perceive themselves as being ignorant because they have not learnt English:

“Kids may not want to speak Italian when in a public group. They may say to parents why speak Italian, they may have fought hard to learn and speak in English, maybe there is a stigma or they are embarrassed to speak in Italian. We still hear it being said by others, ‘that they have been here 30 years they should be able to speak English by now’ (I8).”

Furthermore, one informant (K4) gave the example of a child who may not seek help with their schoolwork because their parents have ‘rough English’. The child generalises the parents’ inability to speak English with thinking that they are ‘stupid’ or ‘thick’ and therefore would not seek support for other subjects.

“Children may not be able to explain concepts in dialect, but know them in English, parents cannot understand. The child may try to say something in English but the parents do not understand and the child then says ‘oh, forget it’. The then possibility of shared meanings is missed (I8).”

The experience of language, of both parents and children can pose barriers and limitations to the many opportunities to share meanings and enhance relationships.

Cross generational relationships

Parents may rely on their children to be interpreters or negotiate access to English speaking services, creating ambiguous intergenerational roles:

“Parents may be aware of being dependent on the children, for example, the daughter goes to the doctor with them, but in Italy they would not have done this, they would have gone on their own (I8).”

A number of informants thought that the generation gap can be compounded by the absence of a common language, but also stressed the importance not to stereotype all Italo-Australians.

One informant (I6) in discussing the first vignette spoke about “bi-cultural conflict”. Celestina’s values may conflict with her parents’ values, “but you can’t assume that all Italian women have cultural conflict, some are restricted but this can apply to Anglos but it’s more predominant in Mediterranean cultures” (I6).

In discussing communication between parents and children, one informant stated:

“Communication can be looked at from two different aspects, basic communication, for example, I want water, there’s probably no problem with this. On a deeper level there may be serious implications. Celestina is influenced, exposed to the Anglo-Celtic culture, may speak English at home. There can be conflict not only intergenerational but the parents and children belong to two different cultures. She comes home from the external (I8).”

On the other hand although there may be communication difficulties, one informant referred to the quality of the relationship being pivotal to understanding and communicating:

“Look at communication between daughter and mother, it [the problem] may not be language, could be cultural, could be communication dysfunction, but may be language, could be any of these or all three. The emotional bond, the mother and daughter have a good relationship and can get across meaning. The content may be different but the meaning gets across (I6).”

Even though language difference may impact on relationships, one informant (K3) proposed that the younger generation is more individualistic and analytical than the previous generation and added that it might be unrealistic of practitioners, for example, to expect a mother and daughter to talk about personal, intimate experiences and feelings. This informant (K3) argued that the first generation of women would not be familiar with discussing personal details and that when this generation of women met they would have talked about everyday events. Concluding that the broader changes and not solely language differences also influence difficulties between generations.

Responsibility to family and paesani (community)

Discussing the first vignette, an informant (I6) stated that there is an implied connotation about leaving home and sexuality, and the daughter’s role not to bring shame to the family. There is an expectation that the daughter will uphold the family’s honour and reputation: “Core

values for a daughter from Italian background are around women's sexuality, independence, and marriage, all tie into family honour (I6)."

By moving out of home, the daughter has broken a taboo and there may be some suggestions that she will not get married "because she has been sleeping around, that she's not a virgin any more" (I7). Furthermore, the family could be influenced by the paesani and "the community holds certain values, beliefs, influences, attitudes to freedom, to the daughter and her role" (I7). This value system, the informant (I7) stated, acts as a form of social control on the community members.

"Culturally; the daughter is not married; the family came from rural Italy and probably a small village. They all know each other, even over here, are probably close knit, from the same village. The family could be criticised by the paesani because of the daughter, is doing what she wants to do, may be because she doesn't seem to conform to the culture of the village (I8)."

In reference to the sexual abuse, one informant (I6) noted that secrecy is a universal response however it can also be compounded by cultural values: "The 'Code of Silence', it stays with the family, you don't talk to the police, the family reputation comes first, it would look bad as a family, her responsibility of up holding the family name (I6)."

Worker roles

A term that could best describe the informants perceived roles is that of being cultural and linguistic intermediaries. It is as though the practitioners are able to straddle two cultures, two languages and bridge two generations: "I would interpret between generations (K2)". Another: "Some prefer [...] a worker who is bilingual, bicultural because of the cultural understanding. The worker is seen as knowing the culture. The worker is a focal point (K5)." and: "Educative role, help the person become aware of their situation. Their perception is unique (I8)."

Limitations

Firstly, this qualitative study focused on the language experience of Italo-Australians, which may not be the same experience as other minority groups in Australia. Therefore some of the specific information from this study may not necessarily be broadly applicable. Secondly, this study did not directly explore with clients their language experience or that of the general Italo-Australian population. Thirdly, the key informants' responses, relating specifically to the language experience in the context of practice, I believe were limited. Nevertheless, the study

does indicate that language experience is likely to be a significant factor to consider in cross cultural practice and there is sufficient information to indicate more extensive research. Ideas for further research could include, for example, group discussions with bilingual/bicultural practitioners and socio-linguists. This would enable the discussions to integrate both language and psycho-social dimensions of language experience.

Conclusion

Cross cultural social work involves practice at the junction of diversity. This diversity does include class and gender, but also cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity. The language experience threads through this diversity. The experience includes; language as a meaning system; the interaction of the hearer and speaker; and the inclusion (or exclusion) of membership of a particular speech community, in short, it includes the totality of one's experience. There is no doubt that the language experience is very complex. However, given its importance, cross cultural social work practice and education, to remain meaningful in our multilingual (and multicultural) society, needs to take note of this central experience.

The following extract is taken from a personal story in *Growing up Italian in Australia* (Travaglia) which sums up the issues that were explored in this paper and highlighted for consideration in cross cultural (and cross lingual) social work practice:

"[Parents] don't understand, they can't understand. They were forced to leave their homes and now we tell them that we want to leave ours by choice. They were unprotected, unsure, exploited, and we tell them that the world which exploited them is ours, and that not only do we tolerate it, we are becoming part of it. In these kitchen debates, in these slamming of doors, in the denial and accusations, there are echoes of class debates, of debates about the roles of women and men, about the separation of parents and children. Here in Australia they become issues of culture, in which the lack of words and concepts, of common experiences and understanding, limits what we can say to each other" (1993, p.14).

una sola voce di esportazione: le macchine e gli apparecchi meccanici (169 miliardi di lire, pari al 40,3% dell'insieme dei beni esportati).

La bilancia commerciale regionale appare quindi negativa per un saldo di 67 miliardi e, considerato il divario dei tassi di crescita rispettivamente delle importazioni e delle esportazioni, si può ritenere che nel breve-medio termine (di qui a 5 anni) il passivo commerciale sia destinato ad accentuarsi. In altri termini l'Australia va sempre più caratterizzandosi come un fornitore di materie prime per l'industria manifatturiera veneta.

L'interscambio commerciale del Veneto con l'Australia, nel suo complesso, rimane ancora contenuto, non essendo questo Paese né fra i primi fornitori di beni né fra i primi destinatari delle nostre esportazioni. I margini di crescita sono tuttavia molto ampi, anche in considerazione delle nuove opportunità commerciali che si vanno delineando per le imprese venete, ed italiane in genere, in conseguenza della nuova politica australiana di favore verso gli investimenti esteri.

demand: engines and mechanical parts worth 169 billion lire, representing 40.3% of total exports.

The regional trade balance thus appears to be in the negative by 67 billion lire and considering the difference between import and export rates of growth, we can assume that in the short to medium term (within the next 5 years), the trade deficit is bound to increase. In other words, Australia stands out more and more as a supplier of raw materials to the Venetian manufacturers.

Overall, trade between the Veneto and Australia is still modest given that Australia is neither one of our main supplier of goods nor one of our main export destinations. But there is a lot of room for growth especially given new commercial opportunities that seem to be emerging for Venetian and Italian companies in general as a result of the Australian government's new policy which is all in favour of foreign investment.

- favorire gli investimenti di lungo periodo;
- sollecitare le autorità australiane ad ampliare la gamma degli incentivi agli investimenti diretti esteri.

Assocamerestero ha bene presente le grandi potenzialità del mercato australiano e la sua appetibilità per gli operatori stranieri (gli analisti di Standard & Poor's attribuiscono infatti all'Australia un "rischio-Paese" molto basso nel medio periodo), i forti legami culturali ed emotivi che uniscono Italia ed Australia e si impegnerà con iniziative ad hoc al fine di dilatare le relazioni commerciali ed economiche tra i due Paesi e aumentare il flusso degli investimenti diretti italiani in terra australiana.

Concludendo possiamo dire che l'Australia è tra le aree del Pacifico che offre le migliori opportunità godendo di una posizione geoeconomica strategica ed essendo tra le economie più dinamiche del mondo. Numerosi elementi-chiave la rendono appetibile per l'operatore economico straniero: un positivo quadro macroeconomico, la sostanziale stabilità politica, la posizione geografica privilegiata, l'ottima disponibilità di infrastrutture, una forza lavoro preparata. E' la terza economia in Asia, dopo Giappone e Cina, un centro finanziario trainante ed il decimo mercato mondiale dei titoli finanziari (il terzo nella regione dopo Giappone e Hong-Kong). Essa rappresenta una testa di ponte verso i mercati asiatici. L'apertura verso i capitali stranieri, la liberalizzazione di molti settori economici, i processi di privatizzazione, le nuove politiche di investimento e di commercio con l'estero, la proiezione del Paese verso l'obiettivo di dotare al Paese di un'industria di trasformazione e manifatturiera in grado di competere sui mercati mondiali, la riduzione dei dazi doganali, avvicinano sempre più l'Australia all'Europa oltre i legami storici con il mondo britannico e umani con il mondo latino e offrono ai Paesi europei ottime opportunità di interscambio e di investimento con l'Australia.

L'interscambio commerciale con il Veneto

Nel corso del 1998 il Veneto ha importato dall'Australia beni per un valore complessivo di 486 miliardi di lire, con un incremento del 44,9% rispetto all'anno precedente. Due sono le voci di importazione che spiccano in modo particolare: le pelli ed il cuoio (195 miliardi pari al 40% del totale) e i prodotti delle industrie metallurgiche (145 miliardi pari al 29,8%).

Le esportazioni venete dirette in Australia, sempre nel 1998, hanno raggiunto la quota di 419 miliardi di lire, con un incremento del 15% rispetto all'anno 1997. In questo caso si delinea nettamente sopra le altre

- *the encouragement of long-term investments;*
- *pressuring the Australian authorities to expand the range of incentives for foreign investment.*

The Assocamerestero is very much in touch with the great potential of Australian markets as a lure for foreign companies (Standard & Poor's analysts deem Australia to be a 'very low risk country' in the medium term) and is strongly aware of the strong cultural and emotive ties that bind Italy and Australia. For this reason, it commits itself to implementing real initiatives in order to increase commercial and economic relations between the two countries and to boost the flow of Italian investments to Australia.

To conclude, we can say that in the Pacific basin, Australia is the country that offers the best commercial opportunities being favoured by its strategic geo-economic position and because it is one of the world's most dynamic economies. Many key factors make it attractive to the foreign business operator: a positive macroeconomic outlook, its basically stable political system, its advantageous geographical position, its well-developed infrastructure and a well-trained workforce. After Japan and China, Australia is the third most powerful economy in the Asian region, a financial powerhouse and the tenth biggest market in the world for industrial securities (the third biggest in the region after Japan and Hong Kong). It is a bridge into Asia.

Opening up Australia to foreign investment, the liberalization of many areas of the economy, the process of privatization, the new politics of investment and trade with the rest of the world, the drive to turn the country into a processing and manufacturing base capable of competing on the world stage, the reduction of tariffs, have contributed to drawing Australia closer to Europe. Its historical and people ties with Britain and the 'Latin' countries also represent an advantage for Europe in terms of trade and commerce as well as investment with Australia.

Trade and Commerce with the Veneto Region

During 1998 the Veneto imported Australian goods to the total value of 486 billion lire, a 44.9% increase with respect to the previous year. Two lines of imports stand out in particular: skins and hides worth 195 billion lire, representing 40% of total imports and metallurgical goods worth 145 billion lire, representing 29.8% of total imports. Still in 1998, exports from the Veneto to Australia were worth 419 billion lire, and represented a 15% increase compared to 1997. In this case we find one export item in particular to be in

esporta in Australia dopo Gran Bretagna e Germania. Le esportazioni italiane sono caratterizzate da prodotti ad alta tecnologia e a forte valore aggiunto quali macchinari e materiali per l'edilizia, mobili ed accessori, ed abbigliamento. Ma perché dunque l'elevato interscambio commerciale non ha generato un forte impulso agli investimenti diretti italiani in Australia? E' una domanda a cui ha tentato di rispondere uno studio recente della Swinburne University of Technology. Si consideri che l'Australia è considerata un ottimo Paese in cui investire – sia per il mercato continentale che per l'accesso, come si diceva, ai mercati asiatici - da numerose nazioni tra cui i primi dieci sono gli USA (col 19,95 di investimento straniero), la Gran Bretagna (10,7%), la Germania (5,3), la Cina (5,2%), la Francia (5,2%), il Canada (4%), l'Australia (3,85), l'Olanda 83,7%⁹, il Brasile (3,3%). L'Italia (dati del 1996) ha un peso solo dell'1,7% sul totale degli investimenti mondiali esteri in Australia. Probabilmente incide su tale basso livello di investimenti l'insufficiente "cultura dell'investire" italiana, probabilmente la esigua dimensionalità di molte imprese italiane non consente di aggregare quelle risorse necessarie per effettuare investimenti cospicui in un Paese così lontano, probabilmente le difficoltà di accesso al credito hanno esercitato un'influenza negativa, probabilmente influisce il fatto che l'Italia evita per tradizione mercati troppo lontani nella scelta dell'investimento, probabilmente l'Australia è ancora un Paese poco conosciuto ed erroneamente percepito quale scarsamente sviluppato e terreno di elezione per l'industria britannica e statunitense. Ha pesato negativamente anche la chiusura di "Invest Australia", l'organismo preposto alla promozione degli investimenti in Australia che aveva costituito un organismo in Italia. Eppure sono molte le aziende che hanno avuto successo in Australia, si pensi alla Pirelli che è oggi uno dei più grossi fornitori di cavi per telecomunicazioni e di pneumatici e ha siglato accordi strategici per la fornitura di cavi in fibra ottica, si pensi alla Parmalat impegnata allo sviluppo del mercato lattiero-caseario in Australia e Asia, si pensi al gruppo Versace, alla Teksid, alla Iveco e alla Ferrero. Per implementare una politica di promozione e di incentivazione degli investimenti italiani in Australia occorre, secondo il citato studio, avviare iniziative per:

- attivare una concertazione tra i due Paesi su metodologie di individuazione di investimenti necessari in campi specifici;
- creare strutture specifiche di promozione degli investimenti;
- individuare concrete opportunità di investimento per settori e località;
- aumentare il flusso di conoscenza sulla situazione australiana soprattutto in relazione al suo essere "trampolino" per li mercati asiatici;

third most important European exporter, following Great Britain and Germany. Italian exports comprise mainly sophisticated technology and added-value products of high quality such as machinery, building industry products, furniture and accessories and fashion products.

Why is it that such high volumes of commerce between the two countries has not generated a large input of Italian investments in Australia? It is a question which a recent survey by Swinburne University of Technology has attempted to answer. We must take into consideration that Australia is seen by a large number of nations as a very good country to invest in both for the Australian market itself and as mentioned earlier, for accessibility to Asian markets. The top ten investor countries in the world are: the USA representing 19.95% of total foreign investment made in the world anywhere, Great Britain which represents 10.7%, Germany 5.3%, China 5.2%, France 5.25%, Canada 4%, Australia 3.85%, Holland 3.7% and Brazil 3.3%. In 1996, Italy contributed only 1.7% of the foreign investment coming into Australia from around the world. Thus we can see that the insufficient investment mentality of Italians probably plays a part in its being such a low-level investor. It could be that the 'small-business' nature of many Italian firms is not conducive to allowing them to gather the necessary resources for carrying out large investments in a country that is so far away. Perhaps the difficulty of assessing credit ratings has had a negative influence, together with the fact that Italy traditionally overlooks far-away markets when choosing its investment targets. It may be that Australia is still a largely unknown country and therefore, mistakenly considered to be under-developed, as well as being mostly more appropriate as a base for British and United States industries. The closure of Investment Australia, a body dedicated to promoting investments in Australia, which had built a substantial network in Italy, has also been a contributing negative factor. However, many companies have enjoyed success in Australia; take, for example, Pirelli which nowadays is one of the largest suppliers of telecommunications cables and tyres and has signed strategic agreements to supply fibre optic cables. Another example is Parmalat, which is strongly dedicated to the development of the dairy industry in Australia and Asia as well as other companies such as the Versace Group, Teksid, Iveco and Ferrero. According to the abovementioned study, in order to implement policies which promote and encourage Italian investment in Australia, we need to support initiatives such as:

- the signing of an agreement between the two countries on studying ways to pinpoint investments required in specific fields;
- the creation of specific organizations to promote investment;
- the identification of real investment opportunities in specific sectors and locations;
- the expansion of knowledge of Australia particularly as a jumping-off point into Asian markets;

di provenienza estera è supportato da ampi sostegni. La politica australiana verso gli investimenti esteri non si traduce in un quadro strutturale predefinito, ma le autorità pubbliche in genere tendono a vagliare di volta in volta le richieste straniere di investimento sul proprio territorio. In generale possiamo dire che la scelta strategica di attrarre investimenti stranieri è stata indotta dalla esigua quantità di capitali di cui l'Australia dispone e dalla volontà di assicurare una traiettoria espansiva di sviluppo. La vicinanza ai mercati asiatici, la presenza di una forza lavoro disponibile e con un buon livello di professionalizzazione, l'elevata qualità della vita e l'ottima rete infrastrutturale e di telecomunicazioni rende l'Australia un continente estremamente interessante per numerose società straniere che vi collocano le proprie funzioni direttive (è il caso delle multinazionali) per accedere ai mercati asiatici. Gli investimenti netti diretti in Australia, incluso il reinvestimento dei ricavi, hanno subito una forte accelerazione tra il 1994/95 ed il 1995/96 passando da 5.322 a 10.104 milioni USD, con un incremento del 70% da allora si è avuta una flessione sino ai 6.177 milioni di USD del 1997/1998. Circa l'85% degli investimenti diretti in Australia provengono dai Paesi APEC, gli USA anche nel 1998 hanno confermato di essere il principale Paese investitore con 4.834 milioni USD. Nel 1997/1998 l'Unione Europea ha effettuato forti disinvestimenti (circa 1.515 milioni USD) dopo i cospicui investimenti del 1995/96 (2,299 milioni USD). Oscillazioni che non devono velare il fenomeno dei forti investimenti diretti esteri in Australia. Sotto l'aspetto della distribuzione settoriale i settori privilegiati sono quelli dell'industria estrattiva e manifatturiera (rispettivamente 2.081 e 1.688 milioni USD).

Nonostante tale quadro generale, il livello degli investimenti italiani in Australia non è certo elevato e tale fatto deve essere oggetto di una attenta riflessione, soprattutto se si considera che tra l'Australia e l'Italia esiste un tessuto di forti legami per quanto riguarda il commercio, gli scambi culturali, la componente migratoria, il sentimento popolare e l'amichevolezza reciproca, il numero e la qualità dei programmi e degli accordi di ricerca scientifica e per la sicurezza sociale. Oggi le esportazioni australiane in Italia si concentrano soprattutto nelle materie prime: lana, pelle, cuoio, carbone, cotone e negli ultimi anni è cresciuta l'esportazione in Italia di prodotti a maggior valore aggiunto quali la componentistica per telecomunicazioni, la tecnologia medica e prodotti dell'industria navale, prodotti enologici e relativi all'abbigliamento di nicchia. Il valore dell'export italiano in Australia è più che raddoppiato negli ultimi dieci anni e l'Italia rappresenta il terzo Paese europeo che

and capital, technical and investment licenses are encouraged and strongly supported. Australian foreign investment policies are not structurally predefined, and public authorities are usually inclined to consider foreign investment requests on an individual basis and evaluate them accordingly. Generally speaking, we may say that the strategic choices for attracting foreign investment have been dictated by the limited capital at Australia's disposal and by its willingness to ensure a continuous development path for itself. Its proximity to Asian markets, the presence of a professionally skilled and willing workforce, the high standard of living and the excellent telecommunications infrastructure make Australia an extremely interesting continent for many foreign companies that choose to establish their management base here to better infiltrate the Asian market (and many multinationals have done this).

Net investment channelled into Australia, including profit reinvestment, strongly accelerated in 1994/95 and 1995/96, rising from 5.322 million dollars (US) to 10.104 million dollars (US), with a 70% increase since then, though there was a decrease of 6.177 million dollars (US) in 1997/98. About 85% of investment in Australia comes from APEC countries. The USA in 1998 was confirmed as being the principal investing country in Australia contributing 4,834 million dollars (US). In 1997/98 the European Union strongly decreased its investments (to the value of about 1.515 million dollars US), following the large investments of 1995/96 (2299 million dollars US). The above variations must not be allowed to distract from the reality of large foreign investments that take place in Australia. If we consider the distribution of foreign investment sector by sector, we find the beneficiaries to be the mining and manufacturing industries (receiving respectively 2,081 million dollars US and 1,068 million dollars US). Notwithstanding this overall picture, the volume of Italian investment in Australia is not large and this fact calls for a thorough re-examination of the situation, especially if we consider that there are strong ties between Australia and Italy with respect to commercial and cultural exchanges. The ties include: the history of Italian migration to Australia, public sentiment, the nature of the friendship between the two countries, the number and type of programs and agreements for scientific research and social security arrangements. Nowadays Australian exports to Italy are concentrated mostly in the primary goods sector: wool, leather, skin and hides, coal and cotton, and in the last few years there has been an increase in major added-value products being exported to Italy such as telecommunications components, medical technology, naval products, wines and fashion products. The value of Italian exports to Australia has more than doubled in the last ten years and Italy is the

fibre sintetiche ed artificiali (248,5), gli apparecchi elettrici di precisione (228,7 miliardi), i prodotti alimentari, bevande e tabacco (227,5). In una terza fascia si collocano i metalli ed i prodotti in metallo (165 miliardi), il cuoio ed i prodotti in cuoio (155,9 miliardi), i prodotti tessili (129,9 miliardi), gli autoveicoli (115 miliardi), la carta, stampa ed editoria (114,2 miliardi), gli articoli in gomma e in materie plastiche (110,8), i mobili (104,3), gli altri prodotti dell'industria manifatturiera (100,4), sotto i 100 miliardi l'export degli articoli di abbigliamento e pellicce, altri mezzi di trasporto, legno e prodotti in legno rispettivamente con 77,1 - 45,8 e 12,5 miliardi. Chiudono, con percentuali trascurabili, l'energia elettrica e gas e i prodotti petroliferi raffinati (0,9 e 0,4 miliardi). Tra le importazioni svettano quelle relative ai metalli e prodotti in metallo (514,3 miliardi), il cuoio e i prodotti in cuoio (328,1 miliardi), i prodotti tessili (259,3 miliardi). Dopo i 107,7 miliardi dei prodotti alimentari, bevande e tabaccosi collocano i 39,4 miliardi dei prodotti chimici, i 32,7 miliardi degli apparecchi elettrici e di precisione e i 29,7 miliardi delle macchine ed apparecchi meccanici.

Il problema degli investimenti diretti italiani in Australia

Quanto agli investimenti esteri, il mercato australiano ha registrato negli ultimi anni una crescita della sua competitività e della sua capacità di attrarre investimenti stranieri sia per i fattori di forza della sua economia (stabilità, trasparenza, forza lavoro altamente specializzata, multi-linguismo, elevato livello della qualità della vita), sia per la sua prossimità ai mercati asiatici. L'Australia diventa così appetibile per europei e americani in alternativa ai mercati asiatici più rischiosi. Nel 1997 si è avuta una flessione nella crescita del flusso in entrata degli investimenti diretti esteri (IDE), nei Paesi del Sudest asiatico (ASEAN) per la crisi finanziaria che ha interessato il lontano Oriente e simmetricamente l'Australia ha fatto segnare un forte aumento (+69% sull'anno precedente) raggiungendo gli 8.598 milioni di dollari. Nel 1998 invece, sempre quale effetto della crisi finanziaria asiatica, pure l'Australia ha registrato una diminuzione dei flussi IDE in entrata che sono stati pari a 6.569 milioni di dollari. Anche per quanto concerne i flussi in uscita degli IDE l'Australia ha registrato nel 1998 una consistente diminuzione, pari al 57%, assestandosi a 2.533 milioni di dollari. Come giustamente nota l'ICE, la politica economica australiana è alla ricerca quasi ossessiva di nuovi investimenti diretti per avviare ad un processo di industrializzazione ancora non completato e frammentato. Ecco allora che le iniziative straniere sono incentivate in ogni modo, ecco allora che l'investimento di capitali, tecniche e licenze

precision electric goods (28.7 billion lire), food and drink and tobacco (227.5 billion lire). In a third category we find metals and metal products making up 165 billion lire, leather and leather products 155.9 billion lire, textile products 129.9 billion lire, road vehicles 115 billion lire, paper, books and newspapers 114.2 billion lire, rubber-based goods and plastic products 110.8 billion lire, furniture 104.3 billion lire and other manufactured goods 100.4 billion lire. Export areas representing a total value under 100 billion lire include: fashion articles and fur coats, other transport vehicles and wood, as well as wood-based products (77.1 billion lire, 45.8 billion lire and 12.5 billion lire, respectively). At the bottom of the ladder, representing a negligible percentage, we find electricity and gas, and refined petrol products (0.9 billion lire and 0.4 billion lire respectively). In reference to imports, at the top of the scale are metals and metal products (514.3 billion lire), leather and leather products (328.1 billion lire) and textile products (259.3 billion lire). After the 107.7 billion lire worth of food, drink and tobacco, we find chemical products worth 39.4 billion lire, electrical goods and precision instrumentation worth 32.7 billion lire, and machinery and mechanical equipment worth 29.7 billion lire.

The Problems Facing Italian Investment in Australia

In relation to foreign investment, the Australian market has registered a rise in its competitiveness and its ability to attract foreign investment over the last few years, as a result of factors which strengthen its economy such as stability, transparency, a highly specialized workforce, multilingual people and a high standard of living, as well as Australia's proximity to Asian markets. Australia, therefore, becomes attractive to Americans and Europeans as an alternative to the more risky Asian market. In 1997 following a rise, there was a decrease in the influx of foreign investments in the South-East Asian market (ASEAN) due to the financial crisis which involved the far-away Orient, while at the same time, Australia registered a large increase, (0.69%), higher than the previous year, reaching 8,598 million dollars (AUS). Instead, in 1998, again as a consequence of the Asian financial crisis, even Australia showed a decline in foreign investment to the value of 6.569 million dollars (AUS). In 1998 with regard to foreign investment taken out of the country, Australia registered a considerable reduction (57%), settling at 2.533 million dollars (AUS).

As observed by the Italian Chamber of Foreign Commerce (ICE), Australian economic policies almost obsessively search for new investments in order to supplement industrialization processes which are still incomplete and fragmented. For this reason, foreign initiatives are given a variety of incentives

mercato del lavoro per creare nuova occupazione e generare nuovi posti di lavoro è straordinariamente simile a quello italiano.

Il Commercio estero australiano

Venendo al commercio estero, l'Australia è principalmente un Paese esportatore di materie prime che rappresentano il 70% dell'export totale. Negli ultimi anni sono stati effettuati numerosi sforzi per estendere le esportazioni di prodotti finiti ad alto valore aggiunto, come i prodotti per telecomunicazioni ed informatica. Le voci più importanti delle esportazioni australiane sono costituite dai minerali metallici e rottami, carbone, metalli non ferrosi, fibre tessili e cascami, lana e cereali. Più in dettaglio l'export di minerali, minerali metalliferi e metalli copre l'11,8% del totale, il carbone ed il petrolio il 9,2%, i macchinari il 6,5%, l'oro il 5% e i cereali il 3,2%. L'import australiano è prevalentemente rappresentato da beni strumentali quali macchinari e mezzi da trasporto e da beni da consumo: infatti tra le principali voci delle importazioni australiane figurano i veicoli su strada, le macchine da ufficio ed elaboratori dati, macchinari ed attrezzature elettroniche, petrolio e articoli manifatti vari. Volendo fornire qualche cifra (relativa al 1998, ultimo dato disponibile) i macchinari coprono una quota pari al 17,5% del totale delle importazioni, i beni di consumo del 13,7%, le attrezzature per il trasporto l'11,2%, i carburanti il 2,8%, i prodotti chimici il 2,1%. L'esame dell'orientamento geografico della bilancia commerciale evidenzia che i principali Paesi clienti sono il Giappone (con il 19,4% del totale), gli USA con il 9,6%, la Corea del Sud con il 7,2% e la Nuova Zelanda con il 7%. I principali Paesi fornitori sono gli USA con il 21,1%, il Giappone con il 13,9%, la Cina con il 6,5% e la Germania con il 5,8%. L'Italia è il 13° Paese cliente con una quota dell'1,6% del totale e il 10° Paese fornitore con il 2,8% del totale.

Per quanto riguarda l'interscambio dell'Italia con l'Australia, l'Italia non rientra tra i principali partners europei, ma è comunque uno dei Paesi europei con i quali vi sono maggiori volumi di scambio. Nel 1998 (ultimo dato disponibile) l'Italia ha esportato merci in Australia per 3.056 miliardi di lire con una variazione del 4% rispetto all'anno precedente, mentre il valore delle importazioni è stato di 2.456 miliardi (con un incremento del 19,1% su base annua) con un saldo di 600,4 miliardi (era di 865,4 l'anno precedente). Disaggregando le voci merceologiche dei prodotti esportati, nel 1998 si può osservare che la classifica dei prodotti esportati è guidata dalle macchine ed apparecchi meccanici (945,3 miliardi). Seguono a distanza i prodotti della lavorazione dei minerali non metalliferi (263,4%), e i prodotti chimici e

more flexible workforce in order to generate new job vacancies, reveals extraordinary parallels with the debate currently going on in Italy.

Australian Foreign Trade

With regard to Australian foreign trade, Australia is principally an export country, with primary products making up 70% of total exports. In the last few years numerous efforts have been made to increase exports of sophisticated, added-value products such as telecommunications and information devices. The most important Australian exports are made up of metal-based minerals and recyclables, coal, non-ferrous metals, textile fibres, hides and skins, wool and cereals. Specifically, mineral exports, metal-based minerals and metals constitute 11.8% of the total, coal and petrol 9.2%, machinery 6.5%, gold 5%, and cereals 3.2%. Australian imports are mainly made up of instrumentation-based goods and products such as machinery, transport vehicles and varied consumer goods. In fact some of Australia's principal imports are road vehicles, office equipment and computers, machinery and electronic equipment, petrol and various categories of other manufactured goods.

The latest available data (1998), shows that machinery makes up 17.5% of total imports, consumer goods 13.7%, vehicle parts 11.2%, petrol and derived products 2.8%, and chemical products 2.1%. An examination of commerce being conducted on a country-by-country basis, reveals that Australia's principal client countries (importers) are: Japan (19.4%), USA (9.6%), South Korea (7.2%) and New Zealand (7%). The main exporters to Australia are the USA (21.1%), Japan (13.9%), China (6.5%) and Germany (5.8%). Italy is the thirteenth client country importing Australian goods, receiving 1.6% of Australia's total exports and is the tenth supplier of goods to Australia exporting goods to the value of 2.8% of the total. Italy is not one of Australia's main European partners, but it is nonetheless one of the European countries with which it carries on a substantial volume of exchange commerce. In 1998 (last available data), Italy exported goods to Australia to the value of 3,056 billion lire, with a 4% variation in respect to the previous year. The value of Australian goods imported into Italy was 2,456 billion lire (with an increase of 19.1% on an annual basis), for a balance of 600.4 billion lire (865.4 billion the previous year).

Analysing the various goods exported in 1998, at the top of the scale we find machinery and mechanical equipment worth 945.3 billion lire, followed at a distance by products derived from non-metal based minerals (263.4 billion lire), chemical products and artificial and synthetic fibres (248.5 billion lire),

di uranio e di manganese, il sesto di argento, il settimo di oro, stagno e lignite, l'ottavo di carbone, il nono di rame e di amianto. Il carbone, il ferro e l'alluminio sono le risorse primarie maggiormente esportate dall'Australia: segnatamente le esportazioni di carbone costituiscono il 10% del valore complessivo delle esportazioni per un valore di 6.198 milioni AUD nel 1998/1999 (di cui 119 milioni AUD verso l'Italia). Per quanto concerne il ferro la produzione di questa materia prima è stata nel 1997/1998 pari a 137 milioni di tonnellate.

Altri fattori contribuiscono a definire la solidità del contesto economico australiano: nonostante la vastità del Paese, la dispersione sul territorio della popolazione e le grandi distanze da coprire per raggiungere le destinazioni delle esportazioni, la struttura delle infrastrutture è complessivamente adeguata: il trasporto delle merci su rotaia costituisce il 54% del volume totale del trasporto ed il trasporto via mare il 44%. La mobilità delle persone è garantita da ottimi collegamenti aerei.

Infine il sistema educativo e formativo è tra i migliori del mondo e assicura un ottimale impiego delle risorse umane; il rapporto tra spesa per la Ricerca e Sviluppo ed il valore del PIL è dell'1,68%, collocandosi ad un livello leggermente più alto del Canada e al di sopra dell'Italia (1,03%), ma la di sotto di quello di altri Paesi come il Giappone (2,83%) e gli Stati Uniti (2,62%). In ogni caso sono ingenti i flussi di risorse di parte pubblica nella direzione della Ricerca e Sviluppo.

Sotto il profilo congiunturale, l'economia australiana ha registrato tassi di crescita reali della domanda interna molto elevati negli ultimi 4 anni grazie sia alla buona propensione alla spesa delle famiglie sia alla buona domanda nel settore dell'edilizia sia alla forte disponibilità degli operatori ad investire. Il PIL negli ultimi anni ha marcato performances di tutto rispetto: +4,5% nel 1995/1996, +3,2% nel 1996/1997, +4,7% nel 1997/1998, +4,3% nel 1998/1999. Il tasso di inflazione si è azzerato nel 1997/1998 dal 4,2% di cinque anni fa, per attestarsi all'1,2% nel 1998/1999. Il rapporto debito pubblico/PIL è sceso dal 18,9% del 1995 al 12,1% del 1999. Tra le varie grandezze macroeconomiche l'unica che desta preoccupazione è l'indicatore "disoccupazione": la disoccupazione australiana sfiora gli 8 punti percentuali, un livello estremamente elevato per un Paese che dispone di formidabili risorse naturali, è scarsamente popolato e talvolta deve ricorrere alla manodopera esterna per settori ad elevata qualificazione. Preoccupante è soprattutto la disoccupazione giovanile che raggiunge il 30%. Il dibattito tra le forze politiche australiane sull'esigenza di una deregulation e dell'introduzione di meccanismi di flessibilizzazione del

and aluminium, the third largest for iron ore, zinc and lead, the fourth largest for nickel, the fifth largest for uranium and manganese, the sixth largest for silver, the seventh largest for gold, tin and lignite, the eighth largest for coal and the ninth largest for asbestos and copper. Coal, iron ore and aluminium are the primary resource most widely exported from Australia. More specifically, coal export makes up 10% of the total value of exports with an amount of \$6,198 million in 1998 / 1999 (of which \$119 million went to Italy) The total iron ore production in 1997/1998 was \$137 million tons.

There are other factors which contribute to the solidity of the Australian economy. Taking into consideration the vastness of the country, the scattered population and the great distances to be covered to arrive at export destination points, the infrastructure is more than adequate. Transport of goods by railway makes up 54% of total transport volume while 44% of all goods is transported by sea. The mobility of people is assured by very a efficient airline network. The education system is among the best in the world and provides very satisfactory professional and career paths. The rate of expenditure on research and development is 1.68% of GDP, a level slightly higher than Canada's and Italy's (1.03%) but lower than other countries' such as Japan's (2.83%) and the USA's (2.62%). In any case, public sector investment in research and development is quite substantial.

In a negative economic climate, the Australian economy has registered very high rates of real growth in domestic demand over the last four years, due to Australian families' willingness to spend, to above average activity in the building industry and to strong participation rates by investors. GDP over the last few years has attained very respectable performance levels: growth of 4.5% in 1995/96, 3.2% in 1996/97, 4.7% in 1997/98, 4.3% 1998/99. Inflation rates fell to zero in 1997/98 from a level of 4.5% five years ago and has settled at 1.2% in 1998/99. The ratio of public debt to GDP has gone down from 18.9% in 1995 to 12.1% in 1999. Among the various macroeconomic figures, the only one that could prove worrying is the unemployment figure; Australian unemployment is at almost 8% which is extremely high for a country that has great natural resources, is under-populated and that at times, is forced to employ skilled foreigners to work in specialist areas. Especially worrying is the level of youth unemployment which stands at 30%. The debate among Australian political parties with regard to the need for deregulation, along with the creation of a

anche se i prodotti del primario costituiscono ancora una delle voci più rilevanti dell'export australiano in termini quantitativi, in particolare per quanto concerne lana, carne, grano, zucchero, ma anche prodotti lattiero-caseari, frutta, cotone, riso e prodotti floreali. Nonostante la terra arabile sia limitata al 6% della superficie totale e la terra irrigata rappresenti solo lo 0,3% e benchè il territorio australiano debba affrontare situazioni climatiche ostili, l'agricoltura rappresenta una parte importante dell'economia australiana. In termini di produzione la voce principale è rappresentata dal grano con circa 23 milioni di tonnellate prodotte ed un valore lordo di 4.878 milioni AUD di cui il 70% viene esportato. Inoltre l'Australia è uno dei più grandi produttori mondiali di frutta (mele, arance, banane) ed ha assunto notevole importanza la coltivazione della vite, sicchè l'Australia è diventato un produttore di vini. L'Australia è poi uno dei più grandi produttori mondiali di canna da zucchero ed è il primo esportatore mondiale di lana: nell'ambito del commercio mondiale la quota di mercato australiana della lana (esportata per quasi il 90% allo stato grezzo) è del 30% in generale e del 70% nel segmento delle lane fini. Anche la produzione del pellame è particolarmente rilevante e la maggior parte del pellame viene sottoposto a salatura ed esportato allo stato grezzo o semilavorato.

Il settore manifatturiero contribuisce al 12% del PIL (era il 20% 20 anni fa) e a circa il 13% dell'occupazione. Benchè l'occupazione nell'industria manifatturiera sia passata da 1.250.000 occupati a circa 930.000, la produzione industriale in alcuni comparti ha marcato ingenti incrementi nell'ultimo quinquennio: la produzione del legname e della carta e derivati è aumentata del 14%, quella di petrolio, carbone, prodotti chimici e derivati del 18%, la lavorazione dei metalli del 14%, i macchinari e le attrezzature del 15%. Unico settore in controtendenza il tessile-abbigliamento con un decremento del 18%.

Il settore dei servizi contribuisce per il 72% alla formazione del PIL ed assorbe il 73% degli occupati, pari a circa 8,4 milioni di persone di cui quasi un terzo è impiegata part time. Nell'ambito del terziario il comparto più significativo in termini di occupazione è rappresentato dal commercio al dettaglio (1.245.400 occupati ovvero il 15% della forza lavoro). Negli ultimi 10 anni si è registrato un incremento del 36% nella produzione lorda del terziario e sul totale delle aziende private operanti in Australia più dei 2/3 appartengono al settore terziario.

Infine il sottosuolo australiano è ricco di minerali ed il Paese detiene diversi primati: l'Australia è il primo produttore mondiale di bauxite e di alluminio, il terzo di ferro zinco e piombo, il quarto di nichel, il quinto

if the primary industry still represents one of the most important areas of Australian export production, particularly with regard to wool, meat, grain, sugar and dairy products, fruits, cotton, rice and flowers. Notwithstanding that workable land is limited to 6% of the total surface area, and that irrigated areas comprise just 3% of the total land mass, and notwithstanding the fact that Australia is subject to extremely hostile climatic conditions, agriculture still represents an important sector of the Australian economy.

In terms of production, the principal product is grain, with about 23 million tons and a gross value of \$4878 million, of which 70% is exported. Australia is also one of the largest fruit producers in the world (apples, oranges and bananas) and lately the vineyards have also become so extensive that Australia has become a wine producer.

Australia is also one of the largest producers of sugar cane and is the largest exporter of wool in the world. In the context of world trade, the Australian market share (90% of wool exported is untreated), is 30% in general terms for average wool and 70% where high quality, fine wool is concerned. Even skin and hide production is particularly relevant and the majority of skins are salted and exported as an untanned, or partially tanned, product.

The manufacturing sector contributes 12% of GDP (it was 20%, twenty years ago) and employs about 13% of the workforce. Even if the workforce in the manufacturing sector has dropped from 1,250,000 workers to 930,000, industrial production in some sectors has significantly increased in the last five years; wood, paper and by-products have risen 14%; petrol, coal, chemical products and by products 18%; metals 14%; machinery and equipment 15%.

The only sector with negative growth is the textile/fashion sector which has suffered an 18% downturn. The services sector contributes 72% of GDP and employs 73% of the workforce - about 8.4 million people, of which almost one third is employed on a part-time basis. In the tertiary industries sector the most significant proportion in terms of workforce, is represented by retail (1,245,400 workers, 15% of the total workforce). In the last 10 years a 36% rise has been registered in the gross production of tertiary industries and of the total number of privately operated firms in Australia, more than two thirds are in the tertiary industries sector. In addition, Australia is rich in minerals and the country holds various records. Australia is the largest producer in the world of bauxite

comunità italiana nel “Paese dei canguri” appare particolarmente vivace, particolarmente operosa, particolarmente decisa a consolidare ed ampliare i rapporti tra i due Paesi? Del resto, contrariamente a quanto affermava qualche pensatore economico dell'Ottocento, l'universo delle merci ovvero le ragioni dell'interesse economico dispiegano compiutamente le loro potenzialità se si inseriscono in un contesto di coesione sociale, di identità culturale e di coinvolgimento affettivo che travalica la pura contabilità del confronto costi/benefici e il mero calcolo dei margini di profittabilità.

L'Australia, secondo gli studi più aggiornati dell'ICE (Istituto Nazionale per il Commercio Estero), è caratterizzata da un posizionamento economico molto solido. Il Paese è connotato da una organizzazione sociale assai efficiente, da cospicue risorse naturali e dispone di risorse umane molto specializzate con salari competitivi. Inoltre le dotazioni infrastrutturali sono adeguate e i servizi sono concorrenziali come dimostrano i dati sul costo dell'elettricità che in Australia è tra i più bassi del mondo. Inoltre l'Australia è un paese politicamente stabile e la collocazione geografica vicina ai Paesi del Sud-Est asiatico ne fanno una Nazione dalle notevoli potenzialità economiche che favoriscono gli investimenti. La qualità ed il basso costo delle materie prime sono di sicuro vantaggio tanto per le aziende agricole che per quelle estrattivo-energetiche, settori di primaria importanza per gli investimenti interni. Gli investimenti esteri costituiscono uno degli architravi e dei fulcri propulsivi dell'economia australiana. In definitiva il benessere economico e lo sviluppo dell'Australia dipendono quindi da un'economia domestica competitiva e dall'accesso ai mercati esteri. Nonostante le conseguenze negative della crisi asiatica l'economia australiana si sviluppa a ritmi più rapidi del previsto. Tra i Paesi dell'OCSE l'Australia fa registrare uno dei migliori successi economici poiché negli ultimi sette anni il tasso di crescita annuo medio del PIL è stato del 3,5% in un contesto di controllo delle pressioni inflazionistiche. Certamente la crisi economica asiatica ha pesato negativamente sulle esportazioni australiane della regione, tuttavia la solidità intrinseca degli assetti economici interni, la sollecitazione competitiva esercitata dalla svalutazione monetaria, l'ingente domanda interna e la riallocazione delle esportazioni australiane dai tradizionali mercati asiatici verso aree estranee alla crisi, hanno evitato effetti più gravi.

Sotto il profilo strutturale, benchè inizialmente l'economia australiana fosse basata sull'agricoltura e sull'allevamento, oggi il settore agricolo-forestale e della pesca rappresenta solo il 3,2% del PIL,

Italian community in the land of the kangaroo seems particularly active, dedicated and very keen to consolidate and build on the dealings between the two countries. Contrary to what an 18th century economic forecaster stated, the world of commerce, or even better, the reasoning behind economic interests, gains considerably when arguments to do with social cohesion, cultural identity, and participation rates are factored into the equation, so that accountancy work purely to do with costs and benefits, or calculations merely to do with profit margins, are not the only considerations that matter.

According to the latest studies by ICE (National Institute for Foreign Commerce), Australia is characteristically in a very solid economic position. The country is fortunate to have a very efficient social organization and numerous natural resources, together with very specialized human resources, at competitive salaries. Furthermore, the infrastructure is more than adequate and the services very efficient, as illustrated by data on electricity costs that in Australia are among the lowest in the world.

Australia is also a country with political stability, and its geographical position close to South East Asia contributes towards making it a country with much economic potential, all of which facilitates investment. The quality and low cost of raw materials are a clear advantage both for agricultural and mining companies, as well as being of primary importance to internal investment. Foreign investments are the structural strong points of the Australian economy. It is a well-known fact that the economic welfare and development of Australia depends on a competitive domestic economy and the accessibility to foreign markets.

Notwithstanding the negative consequences of the Asian crisis, the Australian economy is developing much better than its forecasted rate.

Among the OCSE, Australia stands as one of the economic success stories because in the last seven years the average annual growth, taken as a percentage of GDP, was 3.5%, and in a context in which inflationary pressures are under control. The Asian economic crisis has indeed negatively influenced Australian exports to the region.

Given the intrinsic solidity of its internal economic assets, the competitive lobbying it has been able to exercise given its monetary devaluation, the large internal market demand and the relocation of Australian exports from traditional Asian markets towards areas not touched by the crisis, Australia has managed to avoid wider, negative effects.

From a structural perspective, even if the Australian economy was originally dependant on agricultural and pastoral products, nowadays the agricultural, forestry and fishing industries make up only 3.2% of GDP, even

ricchezza aggiuntiva avendo sviluppato un ordito di relazioni umane e commerciali, un tessuto di rapporti culturali ed economici, sempre consistente e a volte formidabile, che ha contribuito a veicolare positivamente l'immagine del made in Italy e a creare inediti alvei di collocamento dei nostri prodotti all'estero. Attualmente sono più di 30 mila le imprese iscritte alle Camere di Commercio italiane all'estero con oltre 250 mila tra contatti e rapporti con imprese italiane o locali, il che configura una rete di business internazionale innervata in molti Paesi, un grande circuito economico che rende, per le nostre aziende, il mondo quasi un "mercato domestico". Ma le Camere di Commercio non sono solo il perno ed il punto di appoggio per imprese italiane. Esse sono così integrate nella realtà economica locale che attirano un numero crescente di imprese completamente straniere, le quali costituiscono circa il 30% delle imprese iscritte al sistema delle nostre Camere di Commercio all'estero. Nel corso degli anni le Camere di Commercio italiane all'estero si sono trasformate da isolate forme di presenza della cultura e dell'identità italiana in un moderno e strutturato network capace di fornire servizi diversificati e prodotti innovativi quali supporti di una maggiore presenza del made in Italy nei mercati di destinazione stranieri e quale sostegno di una strategia indirizzata a rendere convincenti i fattori, finora inadeguati, di attrattività dell'Italia per gli investitori esteri. E' tale lo sforzo che le comunità italiane nel mondo hanno fatto e fanno per alimentare la nostra business community, è tale l'impegno dei dirigenti delle nostre Camere di Commercio all'estero per modernizzare le strutture, intercettare i bisogni e tarare l'offerta di servizi e la presentazione di opportunità, è tale la coesione e la solidità della rete costruita che è forse superata la definizione di "Camere di Commercio all'estero". Ci troviamo invece di fronte ad un sistema unitario in cui gli spazi si sono ridotti, la distanza si è annullata ed ogni nodo della rete è in grado di ricevere input e comunicare output a tutti gli altri.

Il contesto macroeconomico australiano

Dunque in generale il complesso del sistema camerale e specificamente le Camere di Commercio italiane in Australia formano un "ambiente" istituzionale particolarmente adatto allo sviluppo delle relazioni commerciali tra l'Italia e l'Australia, relazioni economiche e commerciali che peraltro si innestano in un tessuto culturale e umano particolarmente favorevole: come dimenticare infatti che l'Australia è stata la destinazione di imponenti flussi migratori dall'Italia, che l'Australia è paese di elezione di centinaia di migliaia di italiani, che la

developed a substantial network of human and commercial connections as well as a network of cultural and economic connections. Always efficient and at times impressive, it has contributed to a positive promotion of the 'made in Italy' concept and has utilised previously unthought of ways of placing our products abroad.

Right now, more than 30,000 firms are members of the many Italian Chambers of Commerce abroad with more than 250,000 contacts, both in Italy and locally. This demonstrates a network of international business embracing many countries, a large economic circuit that turns the world into a domestic market for our firms. The Chambers of Commerce are not only a pivotal point for Italian companies. They are so well integrated into local economic realities that they attract an ever-increasing number of wholly foreign-owned firms into becoming members of the Italian Chambers of Commerce abroad to the extent that such firms constitute about 30% of the total membership. Over the years, the Italian Chambers of Commerce abroad have transformed themselves from being insulated representations of Italian culture and identity, into modern and well organized networks capable of supplying diversified services and innovative products. This supports a greater presence of 'made in Italy' products in foreign markets, as well as confirming the validity of the strategy which has sought to convert what were previously considered disadvantages into advantages, in the drive to make Italy more attractive to foreign investors.

Such is the enormous effort Italian communities throughout the world have made and continue to make to sustain our business community, such is the determination of Chambers of Commerce abroad to update their infrastructure, establish their market needs and evaluate the worth of the services they offer and the type of opportunities that present themselves, and such is the strength and solidarity of the network that has been built up that what we used to consider to be Italian Chambers of Commerce abroad once, no longer applies. Instead we now find ourselves looking at a unitary system in which space and distances have almost disappeared and every member in the network is able to receive input from and offer input to all the others.

Australian macroeconomics

Generally the complexity of the Chamber system and specifically the Italian Chambers of Commerce in Australia, form an institutional ambience particularly apt for developing commercial relations between Italy and Australia. These economic and commercial relations merge to become a particularly favourable human and cultural presence. We must not forget that Australia has been the destination of a large migratory influx from Italy. Australia is the adopted country of hundreds of thousands of Italians and the

produzione (capitali, tecnologia, risorse umane) ha raggiunto livelli mai prima toccati nella storia dell'umanità e in cui i confini tra le varie tipologie di attività - produzione, distribuzione, terziario e servizi finanziari - sbiadiscono rapidamente.

In tale contesto di estesa globalizzazione si è pensato che la business community di estrazione italiana presente all'estero, lungi dal rappresentare esclusivamente un residuo inerte di antichi ed esauriti processi di emigrazione, potesse costituire una risorsa aggiuntiva, un potente fattore di sviluppo e di modernizzazione delle relazioni commerciali, a condizione di creare un'aggregazione a rete di punti di eccellenza capace di rendere economicamente feconda una diaspora di 50-60 milioni di italiani trasferitisi all'estero in anni lontani, ma anche più recentemente per motivi di lavoro. Oggi le Camere di commercio italiane all'estero sono un complesso di terminali disseminati in tutto il mondo che permettono di distillare utili informazioni sulle caratteristiche e sulle potenzialità di un determinato mercato e sono anche in grado di fornire servizi alle piccole e medie imprese che cercano nuovi mercati da penetrare, nuovi partners da coinvolgere nell'iniziativa imprenditoriale, nuove occasioni di investimento da esplorare.

Il network delle Camere di Commercio italiane all'estero è rappresentato, come si diceva, da 62 nodi presenti in 38 Paesi, collegate in rete su Internet tramite posta elettronica e ricche di un vasto ed informatizzato patrimonio informativo (su ricerche di mercato, aspetti legali, finanziari, commerciali etc.). Oggi le Camere di Commercio italiane all'estero svolgono un'importantissima funzione di raccordo tra le esigenze della popolazione di imprese in Italia e la popolazione di imprese estere, di incentivo delle operazioni di partenariato internazionale (partecipazioni in imprese estere, joint venture etc.), di stimolo agli investimenti diretti italiani all'estero e, in prospettiva, esteri in Italia. La strutturazione in sette aree regionali (Europa Occidentale, Mediterraneo, NAFTA, America centrale e Caraibi, Mercosur e Patto Andino, Asia, Oceania) ha enfatizzato il dipanarsi dei percorsi progettuali delle Camere di Commercio italiane all'estero secondo logiche di omogeneità geografica e di comunanza di interessi nel medesimo spazio. Le modifiche statutarie e le Convention mondiale hanno completato l'itinerario di rinnovamento strutturale che consente alle Camere di Commercio italiane all'estero di affrontare nuove frontiere e nuove sfide. Oggi, nel mondo globalizzato e avviato a sfruttare appieno le potenzialità dell'e-commerce e del web, le Camere di Commercio italiane all'estero rappresentano sicuramente una

technology, human resources) has reached levels never before reached in the history of the human race and where various types of production activities, distribution, financial services and miscellaneous others, are rapidly disappearing.

In the context of such extensive globalization, we think that the business community of Italian origin that lives abroad, far from simply being the final, useless phase in an old and exhausted immigration process, may in fact constitute an added resource; may be a potent development factor important in the modernization of commercial relations, one capable of turning into economic profitability the diaspora of 50-60 million Italians who have lived abroad for many years as well as those who have more recently migrated in search of employment opportunities.

Today the Italian Chambers of Commerce abroad are a conglomerate of computer terminals, scattered all over the world that gives us the opportunity to choose viable information regarding the characteristics and potential of any given market and which is also able to offer various services to small and medium-sized firms looking for new markets to infiltrate, for new partners to get involved with in any given managerial initiative, and furthermore always on the lookout for the chance to investigate new investment possibilities.

The network of the Italian Chambers of Commerce abroad is represented, as mentioned earlier, by 62 offices in 38 countries connected via internet and email. They all utilize a rich and varied information data base (regarding market research, legal, financial and commercial matters). Nowadays the Italian Chambers of Commerce abroad carry out the very important function of putting together the needs of firms in Italy with firms abroad, which in turn creates an incentive to operate internationally (to cooperate with foreign firms, undertake joint ventures and so on).

This entices Italian investment abroad, as well as prospective foreign investments into Italy. The subdivision in seven regional areas (Western Europe, the Mediterranean, NAFTA, Central America and the Carribean, Mercosur and Patto Andino, Asia and Oceania) has clearly delineated the project directions to be followed by the Italian Chambers of Commerce abroad, that is, in accordance with the logic of geographical homogeneity and shared interests.

Statutory changes that have taken place and the world's conventions have completed the itinerary of structural renewal that allows the Italian Chambers of Commerce abroad to look to new horizons and new tasks. Today in a globalized world, directed to make the most of e-commerce and web potential, the Italian Chambers of Commerce abroad represent added wealth, having

- la sinergia tra globalismo e localismo (il c.d. “glocal”), tra mondializzazione dell’economia e irrobustimento delle identità culturali ed economiche territoriali con i connessi effetti di illanguidimento del ruolo degli Stati-Nazione e la nascita di una competitività tra aree-sistema territorialmente determinate piuttosto che tra enti statuali dai confini amministrativamente definiti;
- l’approfondirsi della integrazione economica a livello di macro-aree regionali tra le quali si intensificano e si moltiplicano gli accordi bilaterali di libero scambio;
- l’introduzione dell’euro che ratifica da un lato e consolida e stimola dall’altro l’unitarietà economica europea che sempre più proietterà nell’arena della competizione internazionale grandi corporation aggregate a livello continentale nel quadro di una crescente concentrazione societaria dal volto multiforme (fusioni, acquisizioni, accordi, scalate ostili etc.), ma dalla identica funzione: aumentare le economie di scala che sole possono permettere di massimizzare la posizione competitiva;
- l’affermarsi dei c.d. “paesi emergenti” con i loro tassi di crescita incredibilmente elevati, il loro basso costo del lavoro, la volatilità delle loro strutture finanziarie, la flessibilità delle loro strutture produttive e la fenomenologia economica derivata: le crisi finanziarie mondiali, la pressione competitiva sul versante dei prezzi, i processi di delocalizzazione produttiva etc.;
- l’intensificazione delle scelte di privatizzazione e di liberalizzazione dei mercati nazionali e contestualmente l’avvio di serie politiche di deregolamentazione del commercio internazionale e di rottura dei vecchi ed obsoleti meccanismi protezionistici con il conseguente aumento degli investimenti diretti all’estero;
- la rivoluzione elettronica-digitale della “new economy” che consentirà, attraverso il commercio elettronico su protocollo internet, di abbattere le barriere fisiche, di eliminare – nel business to consumer e nel business to business - costosi apparati di intermediazione, di creare nuove forme di allocazione del risparmio, di aumentare la produttività, di far nascere nuovi percorsi formativi e di aggiornamento, di generare nuove figure professionali fondate sulla conoscenza e sulla padronanza degli strumenti informatici;
- l’accentuarsi della competitività tra imprese e sistemi di imprese nell’unico mercato mondiale in cui la mobilità dei fattori di

- *the synergy between globalization and localization, between modernization of economies and the strengthening of cultural, economic and territorial identities, together with the weakening role of Nation States and the rise of competitiveness among 'area-systems', systems territorially determined rather than determined by state borders;*
- *the strengthening of economic integration at the level of regional, 'micro'-areas where bilateral agreements regarding free exchange have multiplied in number;*
- *the introduction of the Euro that on one side ratifies and on the other gives impetus to European economic unity, and which will more than ever launch large multifaceted corporations into the international competition arena through mergers, acquisitions, agreements, hostile bids and the like. As for firms having interests in common, the on-going development of economies of scale will allow them to maximize their competitive position;*
- *the emergence of countries with incredibly high population growth and low labour costs, the volatility of their financial structures, the flexibility of their production infrastructures and the derived economic phenomena, the world's financial crisis, the competitive pressure on prices, the productive localization process and so on;*
- *the intensification of privatization and liberalization choices for national markets at the same time as the start of serious international commerce, deregulation strategies and the breaking up of old and obsolete protective regulations, with the consequent rise in investment that is directed abroad.*
- *the electronic-digital revolution of the new world economy which via internet commerce will allow the demolition of physical barriers, thus eliminating expensive intermediaries operating along the connections between that go from business to consumer and business to business. This technology will create new forms of savings allocations, raise productivity, increase knowledge and update strategies in order to create new professionals with the appropriate knowledge and in command of all information mediums;*
- *the progressive increase of competition between firms and conglomerates in the world market in which the mobility of production factors (capital,*

Lo Stato e le Prospettive delle Relazioni Economiche e Commerciali tra l'Italia e l'Australia

Danilo Longhi

Il ruolo di Assocamerestero

Fin dalla sua nascita l'Assocamerestero, che attualmente è presente in 38 Paesi attraverso una rete di 62 Camere italiane nel mondo, ha operato al fine di favorire ed assecondare l'internazionalizzazione dei processi economici: creare premesse di sviluppo, espandere i mercati, irrobustire le radici delle imprese, rafforzare l'interscambio e le relazioni economiche sono le coordinate che hanno permanentemente ispirato l'azione delle Camere di Commercio italiane nel mondo. Prima della creazione di Assocamerestero (1987) le Camere di Commercio italiane all'estero rappresentavano una sorta di "arcipelago" costituito dalle isole che i flussi migratori provenienti dall'Italia avevano disseminato nel mondo e quindi, per quanto alimentate dalla vitalità delle comunità italiane all'estero, dalla loro affettività e dai raccordi economici con le regioni italiane di provenienza, mancavano di legami operativamente fecondi con il tessuto imprenditoriale italiano e con il mondo istituzionale dei servizi e delle promozione per le imprese, non disponevano di risorse sufficienti per marcare autonomia e progettualità e quindi apparivano eccessivamente polverizzate e incapaci di evidenziare una percepibile direzione di sviluppo idonea a produrre valore aggiunto per le relazioni commerciali tra imprese di diversi Paesi. Con la nascita di Assocamerestero si è cercato di passare dall'"arcipelago" frammentato ad un unitario, ancorchè flessibile, "sistema a rete", nel convincimento che i processi di globalizzazione dei mercati, l'irruzione della rivoluzione telematica ed informatica, l'emergere di una configurazione di tipo network delle relazioni tra unità produttive esigessero una profonda trasformazione anche delle Camere di Commercio italiane all'estero. Negli anni Novanta profondi ed irreversibili cambiamenti hanno sconvolto l'economia mondiale:

- l'eccezionale complessità e velocità delle innovazioni tecnologiche nell'ambito delle comunicazioni, dei trasporti, della logistica, dell'automazione, sicchè le imprese possono dialogare reciprocamente a livello planetario essendo ormai diventata la prossimità un fattore normale;

The State of and Prospects for Economic and Commercial Relations between Italy and Australia

Danilo Longhi

The role of the Assocamerestero

Since the creation of the Assocamerestero which exists now in 38 countries thanks to the 62 Italian Chambers of Commerce spread throughout the world, it has been operating with the aim of facilitating and supporting the internationalization of the economic process by establishing the ground-work for development, market expansion, strengthening the bases of companies, promoting exchanges and economic relations, which collectively represent the coordinates by which the Italian Chambers of Commerce around the world have been able to plan their activities. Before the creation of the Assocamerestero in 1987, the Italian Chambers of Commerce in foreign countries represented a kind of 'archipelago' made up of islands that the migration from Italy had shaped. Even if fed by the vitality of the Italian community in those foreign countries and by the economic example of their region of origin in Italy, the Chambers of Commerce lacked an effective connection with existing Italian managerial networks, with the network of institutional services on offer and with the promotional facilities available to business.

They did not have at their disposal sufficient resources to establish their autonomy or a perceivable direction in their development. Thus they appeared excessively fragmented and unable to clearly display a direction which was capable of producing and adding value to the commercial relations among firms in different countries.

With the birth of Assocamerestero we have endeavoured to change from a fragmented archipelago to a united and even flexible network of islands, with the firm conviction that the process of market globalization, the eruption of the telecommunications and information revolution, the emerging of a network-type configuration of relations among productive units, demanded a total transformation even of the Italian Chambers of Commerce in foreign countries. In the 90s profound and irreversible changes have turned the world economy on its head. Consider, as examples,

- the exceptional complexity and speed of technological innovations with regards to communications, transport, logistics and automation so that firms can keep up contacts across one side of the planet to the other, the proximity between them now being a normal fact of life;*