

Toni Fontana: I honestly think I would be more interesting to wait for Pascal Lamy, who could tell us what he will do in November in Hong Kong when the WTO will meet and they will have to decide if they want to start to two fundamental points that are, the problem of patents, which sentences millions of people in Africa to death through HIV/AIDS, and the cancellation of the trade barriers which do not allow many Africans from Mali or Mauritania to sell their cotton in America or in Europe. Or he could explain to us why those products, although of a superior quality, are not allowed into our markets.

I don't think it is possible to have conclusions in such a debate, because the issues we have discussed and about which we have heard extremely interesting testimonies, cannot be summarised. These are fundamental issues: they are the true emergencies of our world. We have talked about Sri Lanka, Angola, Chechnya, listening to the voices of the protagonists. I think the only thing we can really agree on is that we have a great amount of work to accomplish, there are great problems: there is, as our African friends have told us and as I myself have witnessed in Congo, Burundi and in many other African situations, a civil society in these countries that wants to fight, that is alive, and that, like we have been told, doesn't trust their government that sells the African countries to the IMF; there is a world in which, as we have heard about, the churches are very active, there are women organizations that are very active, those are the true protagonists of this Network that we are building, these are the people we need to partner with and consider our contacts.

I think some concrete proposals, very concrete indeed, and it is important that we all take note of them. I liked the idea of a court of justice for debt, that would monitor the commitments that G/ countries made a few months ago to cancel the debt of some countries, specifically African ones. The Italian government is lying to its citizens, when it tells them that it is investing in cooperation efforts while in truth all it does is, to a certain extent only, cancelling illegal debts, money that is not in fact going to those countries: this is an outright lie. Therefore a court of Justice, a control mechanism that would keep everyone under a careful scrutiny, is in my opinion a very interesting proposal.

If we look closer at our own things, those that are closer to us, I think that creating a permanent structure that would allow a continuity to the exceptional work we have done in these days, is something we should consider (Perugia be the venue for an organisation that would allow the continuity of the work we have done during these days).

I think we should really listen to Lamy, who has only been in charge of the WTO for a short time, to see if there are concrete changes or we will just be continuing like it has been until now. I have personally for many years followed the international summits and I know they are an endless series of empty promises, of useless babblings that are never fulfilled. I think it will be better if we abolished them or if we could everybody to commit to come to the table showing their real intentions. Therefore we will be waiting for this speech.

The other great battle we have to face is the one Bertinotti spoke about, modify the inner workings of development, this is the road to fight the tyranny of the antiretroviral drugs that are needed to fight HIV/AIDS. Everybody knows, in the western world, these drugs are accessible for a few dozens of dollars and they allow the people that are infected to have a longer life expectancy that grows every day as these drugs become more and more effective. I have been to South Africa, I have been in certain areas of the Victoria state, where the miners and in truth 60% of the people are infected with HIV/AIDS; I have seen the tragedy of HIV/AIDS: in the pharmacies the only thing they have is cough syrup, no other drug. I think we have to support brave actions like those of Brazil's President Lula, the only one to challenge the multinationals, refuse the absurdity of patents and produce low cost drugs; while many other countries have given up this essential battle. I have seen

a testimony in TV not on the field, of a woman who works in an African country, I believe it was Malawi, who said "I have to choose to whom I give life and to whom I give death, the shortage of drugs, means that those who work in close contact with the people that are sick become like the Kapo of the Nazi concentration camps, that have to choose who has to live and who has to not live. I think that the big applause we all gave our friend from Iraq signals our strong, firm and determined NO to the war on Iraq, that destroyed a country, that didn't bring freedom, and that caused the death of tenths of thousands of people and that represents the failure of Bush's preemptive war strategy.

Looking to us, there have been, commitments from politician, like Prodi two days ago, to reach the mythical 0,7% mark (I have heard this since the sixties). The UN launched this goal almost forty years ago. Our African friends have explained to us that this is not charity, it is not alms it is something useful to create development, therefore we will have to continue to control and verify if those commitments are kept. I would like to remind you that a few weeks ago there was a meeting in Rome between Tony Blair and various representatives of Italian NGOs and together with them Roberto Brunetta, Berlusconi economic advisor, who I must admit had the gut to say, and I have never heard him say in a clearer way, "I cut the fund for international cooperation: and I did it because in times of crisis, the first thing you do is to cut help to the poor countries" this of course is a crazy line of thinking, a delirious thought but this is the truth today. Italy has today zeroized its development policies.

I finish by saying we have witnessed important commitment to change way, our task is when we meet again in a few months or in a few years to verify that some commitments are upheld.