

glow worms

biased memoirs of a
global public relator

toni muzi falconi

**glow worms:
biased memoirs
of a global public relator**

by toni muzi falconi

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Published online
www.biasedmemoirs.com

Falconi, Toni Muzi.
glow worms: biased memoirs of a global public relator – 1st ed.

Editor: Angie Voluti
Digital Editor: Zack Baddorf

ISBN 978-1-312-54914-2

Printed in the United States of America via Lulu.com

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

First Edition

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Introduction

A professional, a teacher and a scholar

For the last 54 years I have conducted my professional activity first as an intern, then as an employee, manager, entrepreneur, consultant, teacher and scholar of Public Relations; I have now decided to engage in the onanistic, narcissistic, navel-gazing exercise of consigning my musings to paper for two main purposes:

- a) In exercising my memory, I will hopefully succeed in delaying senile dementia (I am now 74 years old);
- b) At least in part, it is possible that this effort might be of some support and assistance to others (of course, this is, in itself, a self-gratifying thought).

Clearly, this is a post-rationalisation and recollection, regardless of details, of the more likeable and acceptable parts of a privileged and fortunate life. I am also perfectly aware that I represent an exception, that merit and worth may be irrelevant and not necessarily linked to each other. However, arrogance notwithstanding, I have also understood, in time, that one must learn to nurture one's own privileges and/or luck. I've certainly had plenty of both.

“Allah is the greatest”: so begins the Islamic prayer. I don't have a clue of what they are saying in Malaysian, before they revert to English to deliver their erudite presentations: but here I am, early December 2011, aged 70, in Kuala Lumpur, as guest of the first ever Global Public Relations conference for Muslim PR practitioners.

This is a brave attempt to rally some 200 scholars and professionals of Islamic faith from 34 countries from all continents to discuss the sense, development and potential implementation of a planned and comprehensive program to advocate Islamic moderatism; and, in so doing, more effectively to counter the devastating effects on society which are partly caused by the stereotyped mainstream/digital, globally-spreading depiction of Islam as integralism, fundamentalism, extremism and terrorism.

When my turn comes (I am one of only three non-Muslim guests speakers at the conference, two Canadians and one Italian) I dive into a fairly complex analysis of how multicultural integration policies have in the past decade failed in Holland and the UK: mostly due (a personal theory, of course) to programs that had leant more on the two *softer* pillars of the ‘integration equation’ (welcoming and worshipping), rather than the three *harder* ones (schooling, housing and working).¹

This was achieved by both governments and with the consensus of the local migrant communities by:

¹ My Kuala Lumpur presentation (Dec 2011) can be read in the appendix section.

- ‘Tipping the hat’ to classic ‘spin’ to please their constituents;
- Communicating ‘to’, rather than communicating ‘with’ stakeholders;
- And, failing to adopt the ‘generic principles and specific applications’ paradigm of effective public relations.

An assassination in Amsterdam (2004, Van Gogh) and a terrorist attack on the London subway (2006), proved sufficient to induce the sudden collapse of both multicultural edifices, to the point that, today, hardly any European leader openly supports the multicultural approach to migrant integration.

Like amateur architecture or building practices, in those two countries, multicultural communication policies focused more on the ‘curtains’ than on the ‘building’ walls.

When I completed my presentation (my CV indicated that, besides being a professional PR practitioner and teaching at NYU, I also taught at the Vatican University of LUMSA in Rome), a distinguished and elderly gentleman, an Oxford graduate (as I learned later) from Borneo, asked me, with a very kind tone of voice: “...Speaking about multicultural integration, please give us your view on the pedophile and homosexuality issues in the Vatican today.”

I was aghast. I had no idea how or what to reply.

Suddenly, remembering my father’s old advice (“when you have no prompt response, disconcert them!”), I quipped: “Surely you will agree that all monotheistic religions are, in essence, mono-sexual.”

Please note: I am not a Catholic, but a *moderattheist*.

My comment was glacially (rather than gracefully) received, with a very loud and long silence.

That made my day.

Chapter 1: The Early Years

I was born in San Salvador, capital city of El Salvador, on July 22, 1941, son of Marion Barton (Anglo-Irish daughter of Sir Sydney Barton, the Queen's representative in Shanghai in post-World War I and, subsequently, the King's ambassador to Hailé Selassie in Adis Abeba in the Thirties) and Filippo Muzi Falconi, an Italian aristocrat and career diplomat.

In Adis Abeba during the early Thirties, when Sir Sydney passionately supported the Emperor in his struggle to offset the imminent Italian invasion of 1936, Marion fell in love with Filippo, who then, as a junior diplomat, represented the Italian Fascist government.

Their love affair quickly led to Marion's expulsion from her British family. Benito Mussolini refused to accept the marriage until she became an Italian citizen, so my mother moved to Florence, learned Italian and became Italian.

As some historians recently explained (Angelo Del Boca, for one), the incident that formally caused and somehow lent legitimacy to the first Italian invasion of Ethiopia, was provoked by my father who shot himself in the leg on purpose and, in agreement with his government in Rome, accused Ethiopian militias of the attack.

I had to wait 52 years to learn about this episode, indirectly confirmed by my mother before she died in the early Nineties, in an interview given to the above-mentioned Italian historian.

I came to life as the third son of this diplomatic couple, at the time representing the Italian Fascist Government in the Republic of El Salvador. My elder brothers were Alessandro (now passed away, a life-long environmental activist and senior advertising executive), and Livio (today, a retired Italian diplomat).

My early days were somewhat troubled, as the Italian war with the United States had been declared only four months following my birth; this event marked a good part of my life because all my original identity documents were destroyed when the Salvadorenians set fire to the Italian Consulate, after we had left to be interned elsewhere with other German-Japanese-Italian diplomats.

On the other hand, my mother's memory for dates had always been rather vague and my father never really bothered with mundane things such as dates. His main interests, as far back as I can remember, were thorough reading, cooking, conversing, and attractive women.

As a result, well into my sixties, I had three different birthdates (22, 24, 26 July 1941) appearing in as many different documents (passport, ID and driver's licence), in line with the statements my parents and/or I had supplied at various times to the Italian authorities, who, in turn, never bothered to check.

This had annoying consequences, particularly during the terrorist years in Italy, in the late Seventies and early Eighties. Every time I was stopped by police for spot-checks I inevitably ended up giving long explanations.

As a side effect, as those three dates resided in ‘no man’s land’ between Cancer and Leo star signs, I never nurtured any interest in my or others’ horoscopes.

It was only some years after my mother’s death in 1994, that my brother Livio discovered a letter dated July 24 1941 written in French by my father to his mother, Maria Mars (she was from Nice, on Italian territory at the time of her birth), in which he wrote ‘*avant bier est né mon troisieme fils Marcantonio*’.

He was referring to me. I have never used my full first name, and Toni has always been preferred by all (except by my father, but only when he was cross with me). Amusing that Toni, spelt with an ‘i’ in many countries refers to a female, while for example Andrea (a male name in Italy) elsewhere refers to a woman. In my youth I happened to have a short liaison with an Austrian girl named Andrea. Her friends believed she was a lesbian, and my friends thought I was gay.

Back to the story: as mentioned, from Salvador we joined German, Italian and Japanese diplomatic personnel from other Central American countries. First in Guatemala, then in White Sulphur Springs, Florida, and, finally, shipped on a boat from New York to Lisbon, where we arrived in the early months of 1942.

My father had been appointed Italian Consul General in Vienna and we moved straight to the Austrian capital, albeit only for a short while, as in September 1943 the Italian Fascist Government collapsed. My family temporarily moved to a villa near Padova owned by one of my father’s colleagues, who had preferred to remain abroad and had asked us to live in his villa to avoid it being occupied by the Nazi-Fascists or, alternatively, the Partisans, as a civil war had erupted in that region of northern Italy.

While my parents and elder brothers remained there for some time, I was soon sent off to a quieter country estate of relatives in Vicopisano, near Pisa in Tuscany, where I lived with the local farmers until my family reunited in Rome in 1945.

It’s difficult to separate factual memories from tales heard in later years, but I do distinctly remember drinking red wine instead of milk at the farm; perhaps understandably, the rest remains blurred and muddled.

When in Rome, I was placed in a primary school for girls, run by Irish Nuns, near Piazza di Spagna (Mater Dei), where the only other male student was a grand-nephew of Pope Pius XII’s and, as such, by definition ‘untouchable’.

Early on I served mass (quietly drinking red wine from the altar) and got accustomed to being ‘titillated’ by my all-female classmates; I remember, once, being publicly slapped in the face by a nun who caught me showing to a group of girls dirty comic books stolen from my elder brothers; and another time scolded by the school head-nun for yelling “*to hell with the Pope!*” in front of the very man (Pius XII) during the inaugural celebration of the 1950 Jubilee in Piazza San Pietro where, thanks to his grand-nephew, we had been awarded the ‘privilege’ of a full day under the Roman summer heat only to shout ‘viva il Papa!’ as he passed by.

I also vividly recall my first escape from home, taking with me our concierge’s son in Via Sistina, where we lived then, on the corner of Piazza Barberini: a *fuitina* that lasted a full day until midnight, in protest against his parents who had slapped him because he refused to stop seeing me. We decided to return home following unbearable

stomachache after we had both gulped five portions of ice cream from a Piazza del Pantheon parlor and, crucially, had no money to pay for it. I gave the waiter my home telephone number and, in a few minutes, my father arrived, crossed beyond words, paid the bill, took us home, left my friend to his parents' wrath and took me upstairs, calling me 'Marcantonio' and unleashing his belt as we entered the apartment. I dived under the bed where he could not reach me, and slept there the rest of the night.

My father took pride in belonging to the Muzi family that (so he claimed) descended directly from Muzio Scevola, the legendary Roman warrior who set on fire his right forearm in front of the barbaric invaders across the river Tiber to offset the latter's threat to burn Rome; he is said to have exclaimed, whilst his flesh was burning, that at least five hundred other Roman youngsters were ready to do the same.

According to legend, the invaders were impressed to the point that they turned away and left Rome unscathed. This is the reason why, when in the XVIII century my ancestors received the baronial title for services rendered by effective (and presumably also violent) tax collecting, the chosen family symbol was that of a right forearm burning over a flame. To honour the tradition, and to force the use of their left hand, all Muzi male children had since been forced to eat with their right arm tied behind their back.

However, in our case, thanks to my liberal Anglo-Irish mother who refused to accept such a barbaric practice, the three of us grew right-handed, thus trumping tradition.

The 'Falconi' addition to the surname, instead, dates back to the XIX century and comes from the habit of other noble families with only one daughter and no sons, of 'buying' their way into another noble family name by marrying, in this case, a Muzi.

Like many of his colleagues, due to the change of political and institutional regimes in 1947 (the fascists had been overthrown, and the Monarchy had become a Republic as the result of Italy's first popular Referendum) my father was forced, at least temporarily, to leave the diplomatic service, in a process called the *epurazione*. With my mother and a reputable Chinese art expert (Mario Prodan), they opened an antique shop in Via Gregoriana where they learned that antique trade which would come so useful to the family in future years. In her youth, my mother had lived for many years in Shanghai with her father, had been bridesmaid to Chang Kai Chek's Mey Lin sumptuous wedding, and throughout her life had always been a Sinophile.

Today, my three adult sons and daughter often recall that some forty years ago their grandmother would insist that they learn Mandarin, as China would certainly lead the world in the new century.

In 1949 my father, then fully reintegrated into the diplomatic service, was appointed Consul General in San Francisco, California. The family joined him in the late summer of 1950, not before passing a couple of weeks' holiday in Ronchi, nearby Forte dei Marmi, in a house rented by a branch of our English relatives with two daughters. Every noon after lunch the children were sent to rest. The elder would take my hand and lead me into her bedroom. We would undress and under the sheets she would do everything in her imaginative mind to get my penis's attention. It didn't really account to much reaction, but I found the activities interesting.

In California, with my two elder brothers, I was enrolled in an expensive boarding school in San Rafael, the Tamalpais School for Boys. I became active in sports, swimming, basketball, football and... sex: of course, given the

boarding school surroundings, sex was an activity enjoyed either in solitary confinement or with other males: I vividly remember a proud joint masturbating session in my room with the school's most admired athlete. I also excelled in marketing activities, as I would sell ads for the School's annual yearbook to Italian restaurants and groceries, capitalising on my charm (but mostly on my last name, i.e. the consul general's).

That, I guess, was my first business-related assignment.

My parents resided in a handsome villa on the hills of Sausalito, and during weekends I would try to balance my sex urges, by petting with young girls in the neighbourhood, with focusing on financial urges, by distributing the San Francisco Chronicle on Saturdays and Sundays to neighbours.

Once, having gone fishing for young sharks by the bay, I had not picked up nor distributed the pile of newspapers and was later harshly reproached by my mother who had felt obliged to perform my chores in order not to continue to receive infuriated phone calls from neighbours whose paper had not yet arrived on their porch.

In 1952 we moved to San Francisco to live in the beautiful new Italian Consulate on Broadway and Webster (still there today, I am told) and was sent to the Jesuit Saint Ignatius high school.

For a couple of years I did my best to stay away from home as much as possible, hanging out with my friends till late at night, therefore qualifying as 'trouble'.

Firstly, I refused to speak Italian with my father who insisted that I do so and was furious with me; then I *borrowed*, with Paul, a friend, the two first Vespas buzzing in San Francisco: a gift to my two elder brothers from the Piaggio representative in the United States, our first cousin Alessandro Montezemolo.

Paul and I damaged both scooters, one night, going up and down the nearby hills, drinking beer and racing against streetcars. When my brothers returned from a week of grape-picking in the Napa valley and discovered the damaged scooters in the garage, I locked myself into my room for two days to avoid their fury and physical punishment.

Finally, my parents decided to get rid of me and sent me to a Swiss boarding school.

I was very sad indeed, as were the various girls with whom I was flirting.

They asked me what going-away present I would prefer and I chanced my luck: the family of Pat, one of my 'groupies' and heiress to a leading wine family in the States, had a large swimming pool with a tunnel one could swim under to go inside or outside, almost across the street from us. The pool had very comfortable dressing rooms and I suggested that each of the girls be with me for fifteen minutes, alone in one of the dressing rooms. They all accepted and I have never forgotten the many different tastes and shapes: their eyes, ears, lips, boobs...

However, (those were the times!) there was no penetrative sex. I am not sure whether the girls would remember the taste of my (modestly sized then, as it is now) penis.

Nevertheless, it was fun.

I flew to Rome in July 1954, as I turned thirteen. My boarding school in the Zugerberg (a hill over the lake of Zug in the German part of Switzerland) would only begin in September, so I stayed with a young Italian real estate entrepreneur very fond of my parents, Pierfancesco Talenti.

I was his guest first at his house in Trastevere, Rome, then for a two-week holiday on the island of Ischia.

I very much enjoyed those two weeks and remember pestering older youngsters, attracted by my fluent English and my San Francisco tales. Amongst these new friends, the two lovely Servadio sisters from Parma, a few years older than I, who took good care of me (Gaia, the eldest, was to become a London writer and celebrity).

Also, I remember being introduced to the guitar by the well-known musician Ugo Calise, who would play and sing Neapolitan songs every evening in the *trattoria* near where we were staying. Great stuff. I had a decent voice and decided to learn how to play; that, and singing, were exploited to best effect for many years, as a seduction tool.

At the end of August I was driven by Pierfancesco to the Montana Knaben Institut near Zug where I would remain for five school years, almost until my graduation in 1958.

There were three separate schools at Montana, although we all lived together, two/three youngsters per room; there was a German, Italian and an International school. I enrolled in the Italian one, as my parents wanted me to continue my college education in Italy. It was an expensive school for privileged boys. I immediately fitted in and, like the other 200 fellow students, fell in love with Verena, the headmaster's daughter who was the only young girl in premises.

My lack of previous Italian grammar and Latin studies forced me to fall back one year, but I immediately did two years in one and got back on track, never excelling, always failing at least a couple of subjects in June, some years more, but then recovering in the September reparation exams, until my senior year came along.

In 1955, after my first year at Montana, my parents were posted to Sofia, Bulgaria.

Except for the summer, I would join them for Easter and Christmas holidays in the huge, empty and beautiful Italian embassy. In summers, instead, we would stay in Monte Marcello near La Spezia on the Italian northern Tyrrhenian coast.

My mother, investing a lump sum received from the will of her uncle Charles, who had never approved of her expulsion from the family caused by her marriage to the Italian diplomat, had bought an old medieval tower on the top of a hill, in the middle of nowhere, with a fantastic view over the Ligurian coast on the north side and, on the south one, the Tuscan coast with the Apuan mountains famous for their striated marbles. No easy road to get there and we were the only non-locals, mostly men sailing on commercial lines and women waiting for their men to return briefly before leaving again.

After the first year, the tower was integrated into a beautiful house designed by Michele Busiri Vici, one of the more reputed Italian architects at the time, and this became our family home.

In browsing through my father's beautiful 18th century library that had been transferred from his family house in Popoli (in the Abruzzi region), I became acquainted with books, and was particularly attracted by authors from America (Henry Miller, John Steinbeck, William Faulkner, to name a few), France (Blaise Cendrars, Jean Paul Sartre, Albert Camus) and Germany (Thomas Mann and Franz Kafka), as well as by records from contemporary musical artists like Django Reinhardt, Barney Kessel, Thelonius Monk, Dave Brubeck, and Gene Krupa.

I remember developing a particular interest and admiration for the French social guru, Abbé Pierre, and being fascinated by Italian graphic designer Bruno Munari's early books.

Reading and listening to jazz (trying to mimic Kessel or Reinhardt with my guitar and Monk and Brubeck on the piano) became my favourite pastime in boarding school, as well as in the long empty days spent at the Italian Embassy in Sofia. What's more, the school obliged official catholic students such as I was to participate in Sunday mass. The church's benches were very shaky and, in order to avoid falling asleep, I would mentally rehearse some of Brubeck's or Monk's pieces and my right leg went wild, while accompanying my mental rhythm. This prompted the school authorities, annoyed by ongoing complaints of my fellow students who would endure those shakes with me every Sunday, to dispense me from mandatory mass.

I enjoyed my lengthy stay at Montana, although it is not difficult to imagine the considerable constraints from a sexual perspective. I was, as mentioned, in love with the headmaster's daughter, Verena, but she never encouraged me to take it any further.

During my Easter and Christmas holidays in Sofia I courted Delia, the Argentinian ambassador's pleasant daughter, tightly controlled by her parents. It was the same for her best friend Christina, the embassy's Bulgarian doctor's daughter. With Christina we remained friends for many years after she relocated to Geneva and then moved to New York as a UN interpreter.

In any case, for several afternoons during the week, my mother played bridge with her friends, and amongst these were some attractive ladies. Often, I would fake being sick and they would take turns from the bridge table to come to visit me by my bedside.

One weekend my brother Livio, Eren, the Turkish ambassador's son, and I, decided to go for a trip to Istanbul with the Italian Embassy's Studebaker driven by our Bulgarian chauffeur Cyril.

What a character he was: he took advantage of every trip outside Bulgaria to contraband caviar from the Black Sea, and would come back with both arms full of watches that he would then resell in Sofia.

This time, when we arrived at the Turkish border we were stopped by the guards who did a thorough search and discovered a few kilos of caviar. The only way we convinced the guards to let us go was to organise a football game between the Turkish and the Bulgarian guards in no man's land, and let go of the caviar.

In Istanbul we really hit the town! At one point we were obliged to escape from a shady nightclub through the toilet window into a dark back alley. We managed to spend some time up the Bosphorous in Eren's family summer villa where we familiarised ourselves with his sister's girlfriends.

On a more serious note, in Sofia I would occasionally see nuns furtively coming and going from the Embassy and wondered what was going on. Nobody told me, but years later I found out that, as diplomatic relations between the Vatican and Bulgaria had been interrupted, Italy was brokering new beginnings. John XXIII, who had resided many years in Bulgaria before becoming Pope in the Vatican, met my mother in Rome and asked her to contraband nuns fleeing religious persecutions in Bulgaria in the trunk of the Italian embassy's Studebaker. I was later told that some twenty Bulgarian nuns had successfully, at different times, chosen that channel to go on exile (I, of course, suspect the Bulgarian authorities knew very well but preferred to ignore).

Ironically, some 50 years later the Bulgarian Association of Public Relations honoured me in one of their annual conferences with the title of Honorary Ambassador of Bulgarian Public Relations.

It's a small world (and the Studebaker had a big trunk).

During my last year at boarding school in Switzerland I was caught more than once by my principals in forbidden activities: I'd spend many a night out, only to return in the early hours. With my closest friends, we would wait until the lights turned off in the dormitory, sneak outside and then run down the mountain to visit bars and girlfriends in Zug. On Saturdays, we would do the same all the way to Zurich without returning until Sunday evening. I had been given warnings many times by the headmaster, Dr. Ostermeyer, and he had also advised my parents, back in Sofia, of such behaviour. My parents were somewhat nervous: like my classmates, I needed to graduate from high school in Berne under the control of a special commission named by the Italian Ministry of Education and I was way behind in my studies.

One night I definitely went over the top when I organised a 'rave' party in a *bierstube* about 500 metres from the school that also involved breaking into one of the nearby, off-limits and legendary Swiss Army bunkers; according to unchecked rumours, said bunkers contained cigarettes and booze (not true of course..). We all came back in the early morning with the military waiting in the Headmaster's office to interrogate us. That was the last straw and I was expelled.

My parents were furious and sent me to a pension in Berne where I studied as a private student for a few weeks before the final exams; there, I was joined by my fellow classmates from boarding school. Fortunately, I was able to copy the Latin written paper from a learned student, in exchange for my maths paper; obliged to return to Berne in September to re-sit two papers, passed them and finally received my high school degree.

That summer, in Monte Marcello, I was joined by my old friend Paul from San Francisco, and we had a whale of a time. I remember my first real sexual encounter with authentic intimacy (a least, so she said) standing up over a brick wall in the hills overlooking La Spezia. It happened with Jane, an American girl part of a larger group of California students on a cultural trip to Italy, visiting my mother in Monte Marcello on their way to Florence. I also remember another, more 'mercenary' experience, again *in tandem* with Paul, in the Viareggio pine forest nearby an outdoor dance club where we had met two cheery prostitutes. After sex, this time lying down on a sort of mattress over the pine leaves, we returned to the club and, to my great embarrassment, my escort extracted from her purse an open (perhaps used? I can't remember) condom and shook it, smiling, in front of everyone as we danced to the tune of '*souvenir, souvenir d'Italie...*'.

In the meantime my readings had extended to philosophy: Kierkegaard, De Unamuno, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and that became for me a major interest. As with every other youngster, passion at that (or any other) age is nurtured by a good mentor.

Prof. Angeletti, my professor of philosophy, made me love the subject. I took an interest, mostly because I thought that if I didn't learn how to know myself I would have encountered difficulties in learning how to know others (I had not yet come across Freud, nor Ubuntu or Ghuan Xhi). Little did I know that – for many years - I would stop at that very first step, the 'know yourself' stage.

It is ironic that today, I am probably one of the more intense advocates of conceptualising the discipline of listening before, during and after any decision, as an intrinsic and relevant part of any effective communication process, and therefore a 'must' for any professional public relator.

Upon my return to Rome, I enrolled at La Sapienza University in 1958 and began my studies in philosophy, listening to fascinating lectures from Ugo Spirito and Federico Chabod.

This first attempt at university life was very brief indeed. My father was appointed ambassador to Djakarta-Indonesia in late 1959, and as the Italian government would pay my first class travel only until I was 21, I decided, at 19, to quit university and join my father in order to return in time for my 21st birthday (whichever exact date that was).

In Rome, I then lived alone in a cosy central flat in Via dei Greci; I met the three Fontana sisters (Zoe, Giovanna, Micol), at the time world-wide icons of Italian high fashion, thanks to my mother -who was their unofficial yet highly-effective public relations advisor. This, in turn, gave me the opportunity to get to know and hang out with their models. Loretta was my favorite and we started going out together, until she asked me to join her one evening at the stadium to watch a football game (Rome vs Chelsea) with her friend Matilde, another model, who was also the captain of the all-female Rome football team.

I was immediately attracted by Matilde and courted her with some success. My mother found out and, worried that this time it might be more serious, hastened my departure to Indonesia.

I flew to Djakarta via Singapore where I stayed a few days, guest of my mothers' first-degree cousin, who worked as head of the MI6 Malaysia office. I saw very little of him, but enjoyed strolling and drinking in the old Chinatown which has since disappeared.

Earlier in Italy I had heard many tales about Chinese girls having a horizontal vagina, but quickly discovered it was a legend.

Djakarta was a truly messy town at the time, but the embassy was spacious and comfortable. My father would spend much of his time in the kitchen cooking (his favorite pastime), while my mother would in fact sit in for him as ambassador. Social life was hectic and President Sukarno was very close to both of them. My eldest brother Alessandro, some years later, had a fling in Paris with the President's young fifth wife, the lovely Japanese Sari Dewi. Word got back to Djakarta as my father was preparing to leave his post, and this caused some diplomatic embarrassment.

Because of my intellectual ambitions and interests, as I arrived I was put in the hands of Prof. Costantini, the director of the Italian Cultural Institute. He was an extraordinary individual, who introduced me to Asian culture, and since then my interest has never faded.

The first time we met, he warned me to stay away from all those beautiful Indonesian girls who drove a Vespa. This was because President Sukarno had obtained exclusive distribution rights for the Italian scooters and would use these only as presents to his young lovers.

Somewhat bored by diplomatic social life I jumped at the opportunity my mother offered me to visit her brother Hugh in Hong Kong; he was an uncle I had never met. I knew of him, of course: Hugh Barton was then the British island's Taipan as head of Jardines and also Chair of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank. He was married to Rosie, a distant member of the Danish royal family and they had a daughter, Susannah, whom I knew well as she had visited us way back, in Monte Marcello.

Hong Kong was a lively place. I was staying in a small penthouse apartment on the roof of Jardines' office building. Every morning a Chinese butler would bring me breakfast, and on the tray I would always find an envelope with 100 hk dollars. Also, I was given the keys of a small Fiat car parked across the street.

Uncle Hugh and his family lived in a spacious villa at Shek-Ho on the other side of the island and that was where I spent much time swimming, trying to play golf (never really learned), but mostly courting Susannah's friends, as she was already engaged to Mike, who would become her husband and father to her two sons.

The most extraordinary encounter I had then, was on a ferry.

I was trying to read Joyce's *Ulysses* when a man approached me and asked me if I liked what I was reading. He introduced himself as Nicholas Nabokov, musician, first cousin of the more famous author of *Lolita*. A great character, and a lost soul; he quickly declared his homosexuality and enquired as to whether I may be interested. When I declined, he sighed with relief then added, "that's ok, we will have a purely intellectual relationship."

We met every day for about a week; he then suddenly disappeared, never to be seen or heard of again. Our conversation would range from Bela Bartok to Confucius, from Paul Klee to Lawrence Durrell, from his cousin, to Marinetti and Dalí. He was au fait with just about anything I would bring up. It was a remarkable experience.

I flew back to Djakarta just in time to add myself to an expedition that turned out to be an important episode of my youth. My parents had decided to leave, together with their best friends Judith and Wija, for a motor trip across the island of Java to Surabaya and then to Bali. It was a month's journey and I was very fortunate to have returned in time to join.

Judith was considerably younger than my mother. In her youth, she had been an airline hostess and, unlike today, hostesses were then primarily selected for their physical attributes. She was married to Wija, an Indonesian prince, also a very handsome and affable young man. They had children scattered between Djakarta, Surabaya (where Wija's father, another well known Indonesian prince and a noted veterinarian, had a huge farm) and Bali.

For days we travelled through many a beautiful forest, farmland and township. From Bandung to Djogdjakarta, Borobudour to Surabaya; in Djogdja we also visited Affandi, Indonesia's most famous contemporary painter, and in his studio I fell in love with a painting of luscious flowers that I bought, and still very much cherish in our current Campo dei Fiori residence in Rome. I was also stunned and amazed by the absolute magnificence and beauty of the temple of Borobudour that has since been restored (so I am told), by Unesco.

In Surabaya I vividly remember an intense search to find an antique shop my parents had heard of, run by an old Dutchman. After a few hours we found it and walked through a very dark corridor at the end of which one could barely see light. We sort of groped through the corridor, Judy ahead, followed by me, then Wija, my mother and my father. In entering the lighted room I saw an old man with a long white beard sitting in a comfortable armchair, but my eyes were immediately attracted to the ceiling where I could see some very small skulls hanging. Judy described them as Papua New Guinea heads, the Dayak skulls that are shrunk in size in a practice still used today. I was stunned, and turned to my mother as if to protect her from the sight.

Yet she brushed me away, saying: "oh, glow worms..."

I have thought of this incident many times since, and have concluded that such reaction was just one of her personal features: anything with which she had trouble dealing, like unexpected, negative emotions, memories she'd rather forget about, was always brushed aside with an 'oh, glow worms...' sigh.

This feature came back to me recently when for the first time, in my late sixties, I decided to try some psychoanalysis. My shrink detected how difficult it would have been for me to continue after the third session, as the hundreds of unpleasant episodes in my life had been removed and crammed deep down in my subconscious.

Was that my own version of Mother's "oh.. glow worms"?

I decided to end those sessions, fearing that their continuation, at my age, would probably create more problems than solve those I had already acknowledged. When I told my psychologist of my decision, she suggested I attempt to put down my memories on paper. Therefore, I came to writing these notes, and turn them into my own 'glow worms'.

We flew from Surabaya to Bali and landed with a two-engine plane on a dirt course near Den Pasar.

At the time, to arrive in Bali one either took a boat or flew from Surabaya. Many variables conjured together, to make my stay in Bali possibly the most intense intellectual and physical experience of my life.

My young age was one such variable: I had just turned 20 and was eager to absorb any notion, any emotion that would reinforce my decision of becoming a grown-up and ready for an independent life.

Another was the passion for beauty and relationships. I do not recall any of the many individuals I met in Bali who did not fit the former, or rejected the latter.

Of course, I completely fell head over heels for Judith; for a full month we engaged in an intense intellectual. She was a painter, an artist and completely at ease in Bali. Jimmy Pandi, the island's homosexual patron of the arts, was a very powerful and truly intense Chinese. He was devoted to us and facilitated our stay in every way.

Besides playing my guitar and singing Italian, English and French songs (some of which I had created myself: nothing special or original, but amusing and spicy, as Georges Brassens was my inspiration), Judith convinced me to take up painting.

I will never forget one day, when a stranded American couple of tourists stumbled upon us while, with our brushes and canvas, we were taken aback by the incredible colours and forms of a nearby Hindu temple door. She turned to him, gasping: 'Look at the albinos!'

We often travelled to Ubud on the hills - I am told today that it is one the main tourist attractions - where our friend, the Dutch painter Hans Snell, gave painting lessons to Balinese children. Under my mother's persuasive tutorship (for she really had great talent for this) a distinct school of Balinese child painters was created; it would become popular in the western world after an exploratory first show she had organised at the Italian Embassy in Djakarta made the headlines and incited reviews in many western media (as I said before, Mother was also a natural media relations person).

I was so taken by the intellectual riches of this experience that I decided to stay in Bali. Without informing my parents, for 100 dollars I bought from Wija a hut on the beach. Being Indonesian, he had just been authorised to buy a huge piece of land where he would build and then run the famous Tanjug Sari Beach Hotel. When I revealed this to my parents, just as they were getting ready to head back to Djakarta, they were concerned but seemed to be happy to let me play around for another couple of months.

After those two months, I received a very strong message from my father, accompanied by a first-class travel ticket for a boat leaving the port of Djakarta in a couple of weeks, telling me that such ticket was my last chance to use first-class travel to return to Rome; I could take it or leave it, but I was advised not to assume I could ask for anything else should I decide to decline the offer.

Judith had returned to Djakarta with them, I was alone. I missed Matilde in Rome. So I convinced Wija to give me back my 100 dollars, returned to Djakarta, and prepared for my return to Italy.

The Indonesian experience will always remain very vivid and gave me much of the stamina that has carried me forward: very curious of ideas, things and people; at ease with beauty; sufficiently intolerant of others' stupidity, but not necessarily and always arrogant; normally quiet. After all, I tell myself, if things turn sour I can always go back. So far, despite many occasions to do so, I've never wanted to.

For me, there is no turning back: memories, places, girlfriends, etc remain a thing of the past, even if I recall them vividly and fondly. Perhaps, another peculiar form of "oh, glow worms..."?

The three-week boat trip was exhilarating.

First class passengers were either old couples or young affluent female high school graduates from Australia going for their European gap-year before college. Only two 'respectable' young men on the boat: the boat doctor and myself. Some 25 young chicks in captivity for three weeks as we made our way across the Indian Ocean... A small

orchestra playing every evening until late, every day spent in the swimming pools or playing cards. You can well imagine our most popular activity.

Unlike my friend, the boat doctor, who was compelled to do this every time, but only one way (the return trip to Australia had less attractive emigrants), I got off the ship in Naples with all the details of the 25 girls' whereabouts, and gave them my address in Rome where they would inevitably pass by during their European tour before heading back. Many of them took up the invitation and my Italian friends really liked me for introducing them to this sample of young Aussies looking for fun. I was much less active, taken - as I was - by my relationship with Matilde.

In returning to university studies again in Rome after a year of absence, I took up political sciences.

My intellectual leanings and some family connections with publishers and journals also led me to cultivate the ambition of becoming a writer.

Chapter 2: Early Career

My passion for Matilde had remained intact and I began dating her regularly, met her mother and also stayed over for dinner once in a while.

A professional model, she was tall, beautiful, generous, smart, caring and full of good ideas and intentions. I remember how gorgeous she looked under the spring Roman sun wearing a short orange-red cotton dress showing off, as only models can, her long lovely legs and her young breasts, pushing through the thin fabric.

We were happy together. She came from a middle-class family: her father, who had already passed away when I met her, was a horse trainer and her mother Virginia was a devoted and emotional Catholic mother of two (Matilde and her brother, Calvino), keeping a tight grip on her family.

Once more, I took residence in my mother's small apartment in *via dei Greci* where I would also meet now and then my eldest brother Alessandro, who was doing his military service with the US army in Camp Darby near Livorno (when my parents had left the United States, he had remained in San Francisco to finish his university at USF). My other brother, Livio, was about to finish his political science studies at the University of Genoa, preparing for a diplomatic career and already engaged to his future wife Marina, who lived in Milano.

I was actively interested in politics and, after having read Karl Marx's Manifesto, became a follower. This option for the political left has never since abandoned me - albeit it has been expressed in different modes over time - and comprises diverse conscious and unconscious elements.

Firstly, although my father had been a nationalist and then a fascist, he had never tried to impose on me any of his ideas; my mother, a born upscale rebel, had inevitably oriented me to values such as social justice, equal opportunities, and a certain curiosity and attraction towards diversity.

Secondly, my favourite readings had pushed me towards the left, in a way. I considered right-wingers like Nietzsche, De Unamuno, Pound and conservative-existentialists like Camus, as intellectually-attractive social rebels.

Thirdly, most of my friends belonged to some faction or variation of the Italian left (radical liberals, socialists or communists).

Both my sentimental and political proclivities, however, disturbed my parents who were still in Indonesia. At a certain point I received orders to move to London for a while and stay away from Matilde. My brother Alessandro had finished his military service and was in London working for Ronson, in its advertising department. Of course my mother knew how to convince me. She persuaded her old friend Sir Allen Lane to offer me an internship at his Penguin publishing house in London to learn the trade by working with Germano Facetti, an Italian intellectual I admired and a gifted graphic designer whose 'touch' had given Penguin Books its unique and distinct identity.

I stayed at my brother's place, opposite South Kensington Station, for a couple of months, but remained so devoted to Matilde that I decided to return to Rome and told my parents I intended to marry her.

All hell broke loose, but as they say in Italian, after some time they '*fecero buon viso a cattivo gioco*' ('a nice face to a bad game' i.e. 'to accept gracefully bad news') and accepted my decision. I'll never forget my father, who was turning progressively lazier, voluntarily climbing the steps of six floors to reach Matilde's apartment in Via Venezia, where he paid his respects to her mother Virginia: he was a true gentleman.

In Rome I found a 'quasi-job' editing photo captions of current and upcoming movies for the weekly newsmagazine Rotosei, directed by Ettore Della Giovanna, an old family friend. Manlio Maradei, editor-in-chief and a great journalistic mentor, and Ugo Moretti (the 'naughty' existentialist writer who also regularly wrote for the weekly) both became good friends. Through them I came in contact with the Roman intellectual community.

Within a few months of this internship I was offered a job as editor of Stanic's in-house magazine. An oil company co-owned by Esso Standard Italiana (now Exxon) and Eni (the Italian oil giant), Stanic had two refineries, one in Bari and one in Livorno, where I would regularly travel to put together house news and do interviews.

From a governance perspective the company had been frozen, as Esso could not see eye-to-eye with Eni's founder and iconic boss CEO Enrico Mattei. Orio Giacchi, a Catholic lawyer from Milano, had been named liquidator, while Mario Pitto, a businessman who had met my father in Indonesia was the deputy liquidator. Those family contacts were very handy, but I did fairly well. My Rome-based intellectual entourage stimulated my creativity and after my first year the house organ received one of the Ferrer Paces awards for the best 'National House Corporate Journal'.

I was 21.

I also tried my hand in writing a book about my Indonesian experience.

With the advice of Silvana Mauri, who ran the Milano Headquarters of Bompiani publishers (with family connections to my brother Livio's fiancée, Marina), and wife of the noted writer Ottiero Ottieri, I sent the manuscript to her brother, the artist Fabio Mauri, then head of Bompiani's Rome office.

Only a few weeks later I received an early morning phone call from Billy, a good friend and past room-mate at Montana, congratulating me as weekly publication *L'Espresso* had printed the news that my manuscript had been accepted for publication.

My happiness was complete until I received another call from Fabio Mauri, apologising for the mistake: *L'Espresso* magazine's book editor, Maria Livia Serini, had seen my manuscript on his table during an interview and had concluded that being on Fabio's table was a sufficient indication that it had been accepted. Fabio told me on the phone that the style was too journalistic for a book and that maybe I should adapt it to a series of articles and submit them to the newsweekly Vita, where I knew the editor Matilde Crespi. This I did, only to receive from her a quick message saying that my text was 'too literary' to be used as a series of articles.

That episode ended my literary ambitions (until today).

I was enjoying my work at Stanic and had also enrolled in the first post-graduate Masters course in Public Relations ever held in Italy, launched by the Università Internazionale degli Studi Sociali Pro Deo.

Pro Deo was run by Father Felix Morlion, a highly influential, charismatic yet obscure Vatican figure, always up-to-date on all academic and professional developments on public relations (as well as to the CIA and the Opus Dei). In the years to come, the Pro Deo premises would be occupied by LUISS, the Italian Industries' Association University and Business school, where I would, much later, teach public affairs at their Business School of Government.

Small world.

First steps in PR

I received my Masters Diploma in 1962, presenting a thesis on trade union relations as a relevant part of Public Relations. This made me decide to enter into the PR profession. In those years so-called well-to-do youngsters like me would either select the diplomatic career (but my brother had beaten me to it), be employed by Alitalia, the national airline (but I didn't like the idea), or go into PR.

Enrico Mattei, the charismatic leader of Eni, died in October 1962 in an air crash. Only today can we be certain that the accident was directly caused by the Mafia, but this does not exclude other (much talked-about) participation in the assassination by the 'seven sisters', of which the other Stanic shareholder, Esso, was one.

I wrote for the house organ my first '*coccodrillo*' ('crocodile' or 'obituary'). I also seem to remember (though I am not quite sure) preparing that obituary a few weeks before Mattei's death in response to a specific request from my boss, who was Head of Personnel, with a military past, and who often bragged about his connection to the secret service.

Food for thought, perhaps.

Following the plane crash, the two companies immediately came to an agreement, and decided to take one of the refineries each.

I was offered a job in the Livorno refinery, but was not attracted to that prospective. I hastened my marriage plans and, once again, through the precious Silvana Mauri, was put in touch with Piero Stucchi Prinetti, then 3M's Managing Director in Italy, who offered me a job in Media Relations, based in Milan.

At the same time, the well-known writer Libero Bigiaretti, editor of 'Notizie Olivetti' and a good friend, offered me to move to Ivrea (Olivetti's headquarters in Piedmont) and assist him in his job.

Olivetti was legendary in the area of business and culture interaction, and I was very attracted to the offer. I travelled to Ivrea with Matilde for a few days and was shocked to discover that there were more bookshops than coffee bars. The equally-legendary Adriano Olivetti had just died; the opportunity was there, but I didn't have the heart to oblige Matilde to move from Rome to the tiny, utopian and intellectual community of Ivrea.

I moved to Milan in September 1963 to take up the new job at 3M, and began looking for a home; Matilde, begrudgingly, agreed to move. She was a 'Rome girl' through and through and didn't really like the idea to move away from the Capital, but her affection and desire to indulge me overcame her resistance. We married in Rome in early December.

Being a Catholic, her mother would not accept that we did not marry in church. I had nothing against this in principle, as long as we skipped mass. So we organised a very simple marriage on a Friday morning, with only a few close friends and relatives. We drank cappuccino and ate brioche in the bar in front of the church near the Palazzo delle Esposizioni, and off we drove to Milan via Monte Marcello, for the weekend.

3M Italy was then a small subsidiary of the Saint Paul, Minnesota-based multinational company, with some 100 employees who imported and distributed hundreds of different abrasive, adhesive, reflective products and copying machines. I reported to Roberto Scaglia, advertising and marketing director, but my real boss was Piero, the CEO. He would be for many years my mentor, tutor and friend. Piero was intelligent, very active, a listener, and fully embedded in Milan's intellectual, political and media community. Coming from a Lombard textile family, he was married to Lorenza De Medici, a very attractive, independent, determined and sociable young lady.

Piero owned a trendy wine farm in the hills near Gaiole in Chianti, Tuscany around a beautiful monastery. It was called Badia a Coltibuono, and is today run by Piero's daughter Emanuela.

My job at 3M consisted, mostly, in interpreting and adapting product-related press releases arriving from Headquarters and placing them in the technical press as well as general media.

Besides employee communication, learned during my earlier Stanic years, I was now beginning to develop product publicity and media relations skills.

Mostly due to my fluent English, I was in direct contact with Headquarters where John Verstraete was senior PR Vice President and Paul Brown was head of International PR. We got along very well, to the point that they invited me to visit Saint Paul to learn the trade 'hands on', an excellent idea that also gave me the opportunity to meet many other international executives in the group.

This came in handy when, in the spring of 1964, 3M announced the largest-ever investment overseas by acquiring Ferrania, a household name in Italy and the country's only film (motion, photo and x-ray) producer, from the Agnelli family.

I often recall some memorable events from that first trip to Saint Paul.

It was Christmas Eve and freezing cold. John Verstraete, with whom I was staying, asked me to accompany him to the office (about 20 miles away) after dinner, so that he could pick up from his office gifts he had bought for his children. Whilst in his office, we heard some steps approaching and the old, legendary founder of the company, William McKnight entered into the room. He looked at us and said: "Hey John, looks like you, I and your young guest here are the only ones who really care."

A few days later, John and Paul had gathered colleagues from around the world and we were all chatting about work when, once more, McKnight walked in and asked, “John, who are all these people?” John replied: ‘Bill, these are your PR people, coming from all over the world.’”

McKnight took a long and thorough look at us and said: “well, good for you. May I suggest that rather than spending all your time trying to enhance 3M’s reputation you might also want to take some time to try and do the same for your own profession?”

I also remember a public occasion in which McKnight stated that no business was healthy if a single manager earned more than six times (!) the salary of the lowest-paid employee.

Those were the years of the civil rights movement uproar in the USA (though the middle west remained untouched); no Afro-Americans (called ‘negroes’ at the time) were to be seen in 3M’s offices. Before leaving, I asked my colleagues about this. They took me to the fourth floor where, inside one of the cubicles, resided a dark-skinned employee. I was introduced and asked him what his position in the company was. He replied: “I am their token negro and I look after relationships with African markets.” I often remember this story when friends are surprised to hear that as a moderatheist I teach at the Vatican’s Lumsa University (am I their ‘token’ atheist?..).

Ferrania, with headquarters in Milan, had more than 5,000 employees, with a huge manufacturing plant near Savona and a substantial office in Rome to deal with the motion picture industry.

Although it had been decided that the two companies (Ferrania and 3M Italy) would remain separate entities, and also because I had been directly involved in the public announcement of the acquisition, my friends from Saint Paul insisted that I be named Head of Public Relations for both companies, reporting directly to the two CEOs: Piero and the French executive, Jean Imbert. Even in my wildest dream I could not have imagined such luck. At age 23, I was head of PR for one of Italy’s largest industrial groups.

Ferrania had a strong corporate culture as well as a well-organised, powerful and active trade union.

An intellectual with humanistic interests, Guido Bezzola, was the head of Ferrania’s huge advertising department and also edited Ferrania Monthly, considered the most influential magazine in Italy’s visual (photography and motion picture) culture.

Guido had also put together a unique library, open to the public, in the central Ferrania Milan Headquarters of Corso Vittorio Emanuele.

3M’s acquisition had raised preoccupations in the Italian cultural community as Ferrania was one of the very few companies directly involved in stimulating and supporting Italian film and photography talents. Guido feared a cut in this area and very much relied on me to avoid this.

That I did until 1970, and became very interested in, and passionate about, visual culture.

For five years, after having rebranded the open-to-the-public library as CIFE (Centro Informazioni Ferrania) and created an exhibition space, we organised many shows, lectures, experiments with some of Italy’s principal

photographers and film directors. A truly exciting time that allowed me, in agreement with Guido, to attract some of the most stimulating intellectuals to support our efforts, as well as photographers, sociologists, film makers, anthropologists, sociologists and critics.

One day I received a call from Ando Gilardi in Rome telling me that he had discovered in the Museum of the Risorgimento (*Resurgence*, one of the most important periods of Italian history), under a pile of other things, an extraordinary 360-degrees panoramic photograph of the 1849 siege of the Roman Republic by the Vatican and French forces, taken from the beautiful terrace of what now is the American Academy in Rome's Gianicolo.

We jumped at this opportunity as we had no idea that 360-degrees panoramic photos were even feasible at that time. Besides, the siege against the Republic of Rome was an event that would certainly raise much media interest, thus helping to bridge the gap between photographic culture and historic events. We organised a full exhibition of Italian photography during the Resurgence including, for example, a beautiful series of portraits of southern partisans, defined as bandits by mainstream culture.

Surprisingly many of these were women. Thus the exhibition travelled around the country for a year raising much interest and stymying the preoccupations that 3M would reduce Ferrania's investments in visual culture.

I recall an agreement we negotiated with the traditional and very popular Sunday magazine, *La Domenica del Corriere*.

We launched a contest inviting Italian families to go into their attics and search for old photographs of their ancestors.

We promised we would re-photograph the items for our archive and send back the original with the negatives.

The contest was launched in cooperation with Tullio Seppilli, Italy's most reputed cultural anthropologist from the University of Perugia.

We received some 100,000 photos. The program concluded with a travelling exhibition of a selection of those photographs, the publication of a book and a series of cultural debates involving many related disciplines.

Rather than producing a beautiful exhibition or a beautiful book, we opted for an innovative cultural experiment which raised more media attention in itself than any exhibition would have.

What we did, under Seppilli's guidance, was to consider the 100,000 photos as a universe, and tagged each photo by period, location, subject and sociocultural condition of the subjects portrayed.

We selected a representative sample and exhibited huge panels of pictures in a matrix form: each panel featured a subject (birth, school, wedding, work, pleasure, death...) and the pictures represented a horizontal timeline of four different periods, and a vertical arrangement of four different socioeconomic classes.

Our work had a 'public affairs' perspective too: I remember that at the end of 1963, the Socialist party joined the government for the first time since 1946; Economy Planning Minister Antonio Giolitti and his Chief of Staff,

Giorgio Ruffolo, both prominent members of the Socialist party, launched a challenge to businesses to encourage their investments in Italy's poorer southern regions by offering specific incentives.

The Industrialists Association, led by the ultra-conservative Costa, sent a letter to all members telling them to refuse what was then considered an unjustified intrusion of the State into private enterprise.

Unlike all the others, 3M, an American multinational, asked for a meeting with the Ministry where we negotiated a very favourable deal to build a polyester material manufacturing site in Caserta, near Naples.

Not unexpectedly, this decision was largely publicised by the media and the company gained much 'licence to operate', thus raising its reputation.

While the American Embassy had attempted to convince our US shareholder to withdraw, Piero Stucchi, Mr. Jean Francois Imbert and I successfully talked with them and convinced them that it was an excellent deal.

The company had strong marketing and PR activities too: I remember the launch in Italy of Scotchgard, the first (ever) chemical treatment of textiles that made fabric water-repellent.

The city of Florence and its '*Settimana dell'Impermeabile*' (Raincoat Week), an international exhibition of major raincoat manufacturers, was the selected platform for the world-wide launch.

Assisted by fashion PR consultant Beppe Modenese, who was to become the most respected Italian name in the international fashion industry in the coming years, (a close friend, and still active today) we organised a fashion show of raincoats in the central Piazza Della Signoria, under the grin of Michelangelo's David, and convinced the local fire department to open their hoses on the models, in front of the cream of the world's fashion media and Florence's high society.

We got worldwide coverage, from China to Japan, and the front page of the New York Times, to the delight of our US shareholder.

Matilde, who had continued freelancing in Milan as a model but was thinking of doing something else, was convinced by Ando Gilardi - whom I had persuaded to move to Milan to assist me with the Cife activities - to move to the other side of the camera and become a photographer. Ando was a totally 'out of the box' intellectual, journalist, historian and photographer and, with his wife Luciana, quickly became one of our best friends. Luciana was our first son Marco's godmother in 1965.

Indeed we had decided to have children (after a first 'false start'; perhaps we were not ready); the decision followed a hair-raising summer experience.

Both of us regularly played bridge. Matilde was and is an excellent player, while I have never emerged from mediocrity. A Milanese lawyer, with whom we regularly played tournaments once a week, invited us and another couple on his new fancy motor boat for a ten-day trip around the Tyrrhenian coast. We quickly realised that he had no idea of how to conduct a boat in anything but calm waters.

As we were returning to Porto Santo Stefano on the Argentario peninsula in southern Tuscany, the radio announced a big storm was coming. We tried to convince our host to wait until the storm had passed, but he made it a matter of principle that he was the captain, and so we departed.

All hell broke loose: after a few hours of huge waves hitting us from all sides, terrified, we begged him to let us go, as we were a couple of hundred yards from a beach. We were both good swimmers so I stacked some money into my bathing trunks and we jumped off the boat. The swim may have been even more frightening than if we had stayed on the boat, yet we managed to survive.

We arrived at home in Monte Marcello by train and decided, there and then, to try for a baby; and so, some nine months later, Marco arrived, to our utter delight.

Matilde took good care of him, while I played the part of a typical, disinterested Italian male.

I felt total loyalty for Matilde for many years and was deeply involved in both my work and in amateur politics on the fringe side (the student movement), until I decided to join the left wing of the socialist party in 1970.

In the meantime Matilde had also given birth to Filippo in 1967 and to Marion in 1969.

My father had died in Monte Marcello in 1966 (at 65), upon returning from Djakarta and retiring. He had blood circulation problems and, in those years, heart bypasses were not available; I, in turn, went through a quadruple bypass for the same reasons in 1994 when I was 53 and wouldn't be here to write these pages if it hadn't been for the progress of medicine.

My father's passing was the first time I had been so intimate with death. I was in Milan for a meeting with the head of the city's schools to pitch 3M's overhead projectors for teachers, when I received an urgent call from the office. I asked my colleague Luciana to drive me to Monte Marcello as I was feeling like I had never felt before. It was a three hour drive and I fell asleep; such reaction may seem a little cold, but perhaps it was my own version of Mother's 'oh, glow worms'?

My father's dead body was a sad view to behold. I quickly turned to look at my infant son Marco, who had been holidaying there in Monte Marcello.

Following his death, my mother, with my support but not that of Alessandro (Livio was abroad), decided to sell the tower in Monte Marcello and move to the guest house nearby. She also opened an antique shop that allowed her to lead a comfortable life; she died in 1994, a few months after my own heart surgery.

Chapter 3: Politics and Journalism

The late Sixties in Italy, particularly in Milan, were troubled by much social and political upheaval. I was always on the ‘wrong side’ and both my bosses as well as my American supporters from Saint Paul were getting a bit fed up. Robert Peterson had arrived as European head of PR, with his adorable wife Kay, an opera buff and a good singer, and headquartered in Milan. He backed me up every time it was necessary, and I am very grateful for that.

All my cultural activities at Cife had an implicit political bias, and I used to join the marches that regularly passed in front of my offices in Corso Vittorio Emanuele. I would take the trade unions’ side most of time, within my company. I was a manager then, and such attitude did not go down very well. They let me free to do what I felt was right until 1970 when the two companies I was working for merged, and the French CEO took over, obliging my mentor Piero to leave.

Piero soon became managing director of *Corriere della Sera*, one of Italy’s major newspapers and a huge publisher.

I remember one day walking into the French CEO’s large office in Milan. Mr Imbert looked up at me from his desk and said “you know, every time I see you I imagine myself drowning in a swimming pool and you, on the side of the pool, telling me that the colour of my swimming costume is inappropriate.”

I was insulted by that remark.

At 3M Italy, I recall a specific professional incident which left a mark: I was entrusted by the advertising department to look after the launch of the new colour copier in 1968. My boss had agreed to book, on the *Corriere della Sera*, a full-colour advertising page to coincide with the opening of Smau (a very important office appliance fair in Milan). It was the first time anyone had advertised in color in an Italian daily newspaper: I read, re-read and signed off the ad copy. It incorporated a coupon that said something like “bring your original to our stand and we will make for you a perfect colour copy you can take home.”

On the opening morning I arrived early at the stand and saw a small group of Xerox salesmen (our major competitor, which was driving us out of the photocopy market) in their typical dark suit, each with a wry smile and a urinal in their hands, waiting for a colour copy. I had not spotted, during proof-reading, that the term “original” had been spelt as “urinal”.

Lesson learned: always read from right to left (I oblige my co-workers and students to do the same). It works.

After seven years with 3M I decided to leave the company, became a journalist and joined the Milan desk of the Rome-based national weekly *L’Espresso*, covering international business and finance.

At the same time, with Ando Gilardi, I convinced a small publisher to acquire the rights of the French monthly *Photo*, a successful amateur and trade photography magazine, and served for a couple of years as its editor-in-chief.

However, I soon realised that raising my family needed more money than I could make by putting together those two assignments, so I dabbed in PR consulting as a freelance; this obviously put me in an awkward position with regard to my day jobs.

I had not, until then, been directly exposed to serious ethical issues (during my seven years at 3M the problem had never presented itself). In any case, I sensed an inherent contradiction between active public relations practice and independent media coverage.

Ironically, in that period I also became interested in political campaigning and wrote for *L'Espresso* an extensive, ten-page article on the first regional elections in 1970 and how professional political public relations would soon become a familiar sight in Italy.

The article created some waves in the political establishment and mostly raised protests from the very powerful 'reporters committee' of the weekly paper, that accused both the news editor and me of advocating an 'Americanisation' of Italian politics.

As mentioned, that same year (1970) I had joined the Socialist Party and became an activist in the local cell near our home in Milan. This decision underlined my political preference for the faction led by the legendary Riccardo Lombardi, leader of the party's left wing. After about a year I was elected political secretary of the section and began to take on minor responsibilities in the city's party headquarters.

On the occasion of the 1972 political elections, I received the professional assignment to run two electoral campaigns in the region of Liguria (a House and a Senate race) and one in Calabria (for the Senate). All three campaigns were successful and I began to make a name for myself in that area of practice. In Genoa, I inaugurated the use of the telephone for electoral purposes. I had prepared a pre-recorded message from my candidate, and tens of young kids dialed thousands of phone numbers from the print directory during their spare time.

The recorded message used rudimentary tape recorders of the time and the candidate said something like 'I would be happy to speak with you personally if you call me at this number every morning from 8 to 9am'.

In Calabria, instead, I designed a map of Italy turned upside down with Cosenza, the capital of that poor southern region, placed exactly where Milan normally is; the two cities had been swapped in the graphic rendition of my chosen headline: "the way forward..."

Later, that summer, I joined the first Italian delegation of the Socialist Party to communist China. It was the time of the cultural revolution and we were in Shanghai when we received news of the disappearance of Lin Biao's plane as he was escaping to Russia. Only when we returned to Italy did we find out it had been shot down.

In three weeks we visited many communes and always held discussions with the local political commission. Assigned by our hosts, we had with us a young and learned Chinese interpreter, and I wrote various articles expressing my admiration for the Chinese people and their political model in the Socialist daily *L'Avanti*.

It was only some twenty years later that I discovered our more embarrassing questions had not been translated by the interpreter, nor the hypothetical answers.

In fact, as the commune leaderships were in the countryside and spoke different dialects, translation of those would have been necessary, but the same interpreter, who came to see me in Rome in the mid-Eighties, confessed that this did not take place. The political leader of each commune understood perfectly what we were asking but gave his answers in dialect which were in turn translated and adapted in Italian by the interpreter himself, who was also a political commissar.

An excellent example of safe gatekeeping and message control.

At the end of 1972 Piero Stucchi Prinetti left the *Corriere* to become CEO of Fabbri Editori and asked me to join him as Director of Communication. I was thrilled: Fabbri was not only at the time the country's major publisher, but also the only one which really invested significant resources in both Advertising and Public Relations.

The communication department had some thirty employees; I was member of the executive committee and held responsibility for all internal and external communication activities. Once more, I felt like luck and coincidence were on my side. By the time I had joined Fabbri Editori in 1972, my socialist militancy was well known to both my new colleagues and the media. For a couple of years, this worked fairly well as I was supported by Piero Stucchi.

One or two episodes in those years, spring to mind.

- a) The launch of the first Italian popular feminist pamphlet '*La Donna è Mobile*' by the well-known, controversial and progressive journalist Natalia Aspesi.

In those years books were never advertised on the national television channel (which was State-owned) because it was too expensive and almost impossible to find proper space, as the demand was much higher than the offer.

Fabbri instead used to buy in advance a lot of TV time to launch its installments, sold in news stands by the hundreds of thousands. I had some residual TV time at my disposal and I knew that advertising a feminist book on TV would create a scandal, so I sent to the national TV Censure Department (which no longer exists) a script for a three-minute commercial that, as I predicted and hoped for, was instantly rejected.

I immediately made this public and the media had a hay-day giving huge editorial space to the book that sold like hot cakes.

- b) I also organised my first ever roadshow for (and with) the famous underwater sea explorer Jacques Yves Cousteau. We travelled around the country for two weeks to present his latest Encyclopedia of the Seas, published in installments. It was a very fruitful experience which resulted in a long-standing friendship over the years, until his death.

However, political activism was taking more and more of my time.

When Piero eventually left Fabbri in 1974, I also decided to leave and try my hand at consultancy by creating MFcommunications together with my brother Alessandro who was then living in Milan, had left Ronson, and acted as a consultant for the Italian management of the Swiss Cheese Consortium from the Milan office of a UK-based advertising agency.

It is ironic that in 1974 I would use the plural 's' at the end of the word 'communication' as the name of my first consultancy, while today I insist in explaining to my students that the 's' defines transport and mobility, and that communication itself is a process; 'communications' is the term to denote just the outcomes of that process.

Many years later, in 2000, this issue occupied a whole day of discussion amongst Public Relations heads from different continents at one of the first preliminary meetings of the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication (without the s) Management.

I had also joined Ferpi, the newly-formed (1970) Italian professional association of Public Relations and soon became, and still am today, an active member.

My plan was to be able to continue my political activities and at the same time earn a decent living.

Despite this plan's contradictions and ambiguity, we actually did it: apart from the Swiss Cheese Consortium, some leftover consultancy from Fabbri, and a public affairs assignment from Ronson, we landed a number of new clients in 1975/76: the Milan Stock Exchange, Philip Morris, Predictor, the book publisher Longanesi, the daily-to-be *La Repubblica* and the weekly *L'Europeo*, owned by the Rizzoli publishing firm.

We assisted Milan Stock Exchange's governance committee in its involvement with the inception of *Consob* (the financial markets' overseeing authority which was eventually created in 1977); we managed its media relations and bridged the cultural and credibility gap that the stock market had with the Italian political left (socialists and communists): today's President of the Republic, Giorgio Napolitano, an excellent English speaker, was then head of the economic department of the Communist Party.

To ensure a continued presence in the Exchange, as required by the client, I hired a young friend who had studied economics at Bocconi University and was at the time in the planning office of the Assolombarda (Milan's powerful industrialists association). His name was Furio Garbagnati, who would be one of my closest friends and associates for many years.

Another, interesting assignment was supporting the introduction in Italy of 'Predictor', the first ever pregnancy test one could directly buy over-the-counter at any pharmacy.

We knew that the Vatican would be against this. So we made an agreement with Milan's most read evening newspaper (the conservative and catholic *La Notte*) and granted it the exclusive, but only if the news would appear on the front page.

We gambled that the next morning the Vatican daily press and radio would attack the new product, which inevitably happened.

We immediately called a press conference that same afternoon in Milan, with a couple of highly-regarded non-religious doctors and specialists who had been contacted earlier and who, in turn, attacked the Vatican for its backward position.

The client was thrilled and interrupted the planned advertising campaign as, given the earned media exposure, the first stock of product was sold out in ten days.

As for Longanesi, the book publisher, we had been commissioned – given my previous involvement with Fabbri/Cousteau and the success of that venture - to organise another road show to launch the first novel of the iconic Canadian singer, poet and writer, Leonard Cohen.

What an experience! He arrived in Milan and we also went to Padua, Rome and Naples. All presentations were held in huge University auditoriums, overcrowded with students, hippies and intellectuals. Leonard was flexible and would always be willing to sing Suzanne, the Chelsea Hotel and other favorites. A groupie movement followed the road show, led by two of my best friends and beautiful young ladies.

One was Irene Bignardi, then copywriter at the iconic Olivetti, but who, soon after, would become a familiar name on *La Repubblica's* cultural page; the other was Alessandra Ravetta who, with her husband Umberto Brunetti, had founded the communication, publishing and journalistic monthly *Prima Comunicazione*, still very prominent today.

At the end of each presentation Leonard would disappear with one or more of the local groupies and would return to the hotel in the early morning, completely stoned.

The book sold very well.

In middle of 1975 Eugenio Scalfari, to whom I had ultimately reported in the short time I spent as international business writer for *L'Espresso* a few years back, decided to launch *La Repubblica*, a new national daily newspaper, and asked our support in organising a four-month tour of major Italian cities to present the newspaper project and discuss it with its potential readership. The project was to be launched in the autumn, and the finished product would appear on newstands in January 1976.

I enrolled Giampaolo Girona, an excellent, determined and hard working colleague I had known for some time and, together, we organised what became known as the '*Scalfagiuro*' (Scalfari-tour).

We selected 16 cities to visit over a period of four months, one presentation per week from Palermo to Milan, Venice, Genoa and Turin. We quickly realised that we were introducing a new political party rather than just a newspaper.

The socialist debacle in the 1975 local elections, and the communist party's inability to become part of the government for a raft of international reasons, created a lot of interest in Scalfari and his original team of founding reporters, including legendary Sandro Viola, Giorgio Bocca, and Giuseppe Turani. It was a rewarding experience, with the added bonus of being able to create a long-term bond with the leaders of what would become a highly valuable publication.

One of the founders of *La Repubblica*, legendary investigative journalist Mario Pirani, was later selected to re-launch the weekly *L'Europeo*, a moderately progressive magazine, and asked us to organise a 'creative' presentation in Milan to all advertising and corporate outlets.

We decided to hold this event in the immediate outskirts of Milan at the huge television studios of the Rizzoli group, the holding company that owned the weekly magazine.

We had contracted the then emergent and 'intellectually-correct' British mime Lindsay Kemp to perform for the audience, and also invited many celebrities. It was during the summer, and we were not expecting the pouring rain that began in the morning of the event.

Everything had been planned for an outside performance.

Desperate, my colleague and partner Giampaolo Girona decided to fly a Nigerian weather wizard on a private plane (belonging to the client's holding company) from Rome to Milan. At 4pm (the event was due to start at 6.30pm) the wizard arrived and, under the pouring rain, began his woo-doo dance while we were preparing an emergency performance inside. At 5.30pm the rain suddenly stopped and a beautiful, bright sky emerged for a very successful event which also marked our name as the good-luck organisers of complex events.

Chapter 4: Philip Morris

Onto Philip Morris, one of our accounts: it was and still is, by far, the biggest international tobacco player in the Italian market. We participated in a bid and won after having promised our potential clients that we would immediately switch brands: I smoked Kents; Ghigo Roggero, whom I had selected as an operative account director for that client and was possibly amongst the two best and renown professionals at the time (the other being Aldo Chiappe), smoked Gauloise. Lesson learned: never consume products from the competition in front of a client.

In any case, the first project we handled for Philip Morris was to organize a tour of famous orchestra *La Scala* to the United States, and specifically to Washington DC's Kennedy Center for the celebrations of the USA's bicentennial; Philip Morris sponsored the event and we secured the presence of ten senior Italian journalists from various outlets, to attend the various performances and follow the orchestra. Paolo Grassi was the overall organiser and Claudio Abbado, the conductor. The day after we gave the news to the Italian media that Philip Morris would sponsor the event, daily paper *La Repubblica* published a vignette by Giorgio Forattini (at the time the best known graphic creative satirist) on its front page, where one could see Abbado directing the orchestra from a Marlboro (the brand is owned by Philip Morris) pack-shaped podium.

I remember a formal reception at the Kennedy Center. I knew I needed a tuxedo (the Italian term for a tuxedo is 'smoking', *boni soit qui mal y pense*) and I asked an American friend if a white jacket would be appropriate.

Unfortunately my source had not been to a formal reception for many years.

When I arrived at the reception, apart from the waiters, I was the only one in a white jacket as all the other guests wore either black, purple or red. One of my roles at the reception was also to interview various personalities for Berlusconi's (yes, he already had a private TV then) Telemilano.

As I was moving around the reception to identify the interviewees, I was accompanied by the TV crew, equipped at the time, with heavy and tall lights. One of the lights, dropping from a height, fell on my nose as I was interviewing the First Lady and blood splashed onto my face, and of course, on my white jacket. Great fun.

It wasn't long before local private TV channels had sprouted all over the country. Philip Morris was about to launch a new product: a Muratti with an adjustable filter. The smoker could twist the filter to control the levels of tar and nicotine of each cigarette.

Launching a new tobacco product in a market where cigarette advertising had been forbidden since 1962 (the first country ever to do this, not for health reasons but to protect the Italian monopoly, as recorded by parliamentary papers of the time) was a challenge that required very prolonged and meticulous planning.

In this case we decided to produce Italy's first ever VNR (video news release), a PR tool that was then becoming popular in the United States. We offered this to one hundred local TV channels and it was picked up, at no cost for

Philip Morris, by most of them. Indeed many print media published the news mentioning the uniqueness of the tool we used, and the product immediately took off.

However, a few months later, for a reason I never really discovered, it was taken off the market. I figured that it was either because Philip Morris discovered that the product was not working (unlikely, because - being a smoker myself - I could certainly detect the difference); or maybe health authorities had warned Philip Morris that the product was more harmful than indicated, or (more likely) because its quick success on the market had made the company uncomfortable: it may have been receiving pressure to extend the feature also to other brands, which would have disrupted their carefully-planned production systems.

In 1979, in cooperation with the city of Venice, Unesco and the International Centre of Photography, we organised six months of free workshops for the Philip Morris Foundation, in the beautiful Palazzo Fortuny, alternating as leading attractions 42 of the world's most reputed photographers of all sectors, from news to fashion, industrial and still-life, and this gave me the opportunity to use the relationship network I had developed with the Italian and international media a decade earlier as director of the Ferrania Information Centre.

Yet, most of the activity we were doing for Philip Morris was in the public affairs domain.

As we began our assignment in 1976, Italy's health minister, Costante Degan, a dedicated doctor and anti-tobacco activist, had introduced to the Parliament a law proposal that would ban smoking in all enclosed public places.

Our mandate was to beat this proposal or, at least, to delay its approval and water down its contents as much as conceivably possible.

The Italian public policy process was then easily delay-able for at least three reasons:

- a) if a proposal were approved by one House (Parliament or Senate) it needed to be approved exactly in the same version in the other House before being passed as law;
- b) governments would frequently fall and, more often than not, early elections were called, with the result that the full legislative process needed to begin all over again;
- c) the central government was always a coalition of different interests and it was not difficult to exercise pressure on some to avoid the government issuing a decree, which would have been the only way to overcome the first two constraints.

In short, it was almost impossible to get anything approved, but it was not difficult to delay other people's proposals.

The tactics adopted included:

- a) crowding parliamentary Health Commissions of both Houses with tens of legislation proposals, each modified in a couple of articles ranging from 'prohibitionist' to very liberal;

- b) lobbying the presidency of both Houses so that mandatory opinions needed to be given to the Health Commission also by other Commissions, as the subject of individual rights and freedom was on everyone's agenda;
- c) creating tactical as well as strategic alliances with others with vested interests in different parts of the proposed legislation. For example: powerful hotel, restaurant and bar owner associations, who were afraid that they might lose customers; air conditioning manufacturers, interested in introducing a waiver of the prohibition to use such devices in certain public spaces under certain air quality conditions; smokers themselves, terrified by the idea; the latter, with our help of course, created a Smokers' Associations led by many respected MPs from the whole political spectrum as well as actors, intellectuals and celebrities.

In fact the law was eventually approved in 1996, twenty years after it was first proposed; this came about, however, only following the WHO (World Health Organisation)'s formal international statement as final proof that passive smoking (or environmental smoking as we preferred to call it) was harmful to non-smokers' health.

Coincidentally (or not quite) this is when I decided, out of my own will and after twenty years, to stop working as consultant for the international tobacco industry.

Back in 1984 Philip Morris had decided that the whole international tobacco industry needed to unite and work together on some common issues.

The CDIT (Center of Documentation of Tobacco) was formed in 1986 and our company created and managed it for ten years. Every letter, leaflet, pamphlet, event, statement, research, advertisement was visibly signed by the main five tobacco companies, so in no way could it have been mistaken for a separate 'front organisation'.

The CDIT quickly became well known, mostly because of the 'courteous smoker' campaign we devised, which focused on committed smokers to convince them to avoid smoking in front of non-smokers, always ask 'do you mind?', carry along portable small ashtrays etc...

For many years this campaign succeeded in reducing micro-conflictuality between smokers and non-smokers, as proven by a monthly 'micro-conflictuality index' we devised together with five Italian daily newspapers, and carried out by one of the most respectable Italian research companies.

Of course, it was a known and declared fact that we paid for the research, but the results were sent directly from the research company to the newspapers and we would read the results only when they were published.

We stumbled upon another incident when a disturbing leaflet began to circulate in many social communities in France, Italy, Germany and other European countries through hospitals, schools, manufacturing plants, offices etc..

Typed on a traditional typewriter, the leaflet warned receivers that many branded consumer products (soft drinks, sweets, cigarettes) were unhealthy because of the intensive use of colouring and additive chemicals by some manufacturers and caused cancer. This rumor had been going around for some time, but in this case the fact that it was typed on the *Hopital de Villejuif's* headed paper lent it more credibility. The hospital was, at the time, the best-

known cancer medical center of Europe, and the leaflet was signed by its director! Its active distribution by social volunteers began to have an effect on the sales of the brands it mentioned.

A first attempt to gather the manufacturers of the brands mentioned in the pamphlet and create a united front failed: many salespersons of those brands would add other competitive brands to the leaflet in their possession and distribute them as well; the other manufacturers did not wish to be seen mounting a counteroffensive in a tie-up with tobacco companies.

Our clients asked us to do our part and try to stop this epidemic turn of events that in only a few months had hit sales by as much as 15%.

I had heard months before of a Prof. Jean Louis Kapferer, a French scholar that had founded a Fondation Sur le Rumeurs 'Foundation on Rumours' and today is one of the top international luxury brand scholars and business consultants.

I called him, asked to see him and spent two days in Paris telling him the story and discussing with him what could be done to dilute the impact the leaflet was having. We arrived to the conclusion that our best bet (preferred to more explicit and public denials that would only have spread the rumours further) was to keep the media out of this and try and counteract the leaflet with another leaflet that said the opposite, signed by the same director of the Hospital (who was obviously happy to do this as his signature had been forged in the original one, causing him a lot of grief since the inception of the story).

This we did, by using the tobacco manufacturers' sales forces in the territory that would alert us when they encountered the original leaflet and widely distribute the second leaflet.

When this scheme began to prove effective, all the other manufacturers joined us in our efforts. The Villejiuf leaflet slowly died away after a couple of years.

Lesson learned: if you want to kill rumours, use the same original channels through which it came in the first place.

In short, my twenty years of work for Philip Morris were very intense and I learned all that I could, as I was fortunate enough to be always included in that company's international 'best practice' teams.

Four years after I had stopped working for the tobacco industry, in July 2000, I was relaxing on a Saturday morning in a house we had rented on the *Costiera Amalfitana* when my phone rang.

"Hello" said the caller, "I write for the New England Journal of Medicine. Are you Mr Muzi Falconi?"

"Yes, I am, what can I do for you?" I was rather surprised, as I revered that journal but had not been in contact for years.

"Well," he said, "I would like you to confirm that on 28 April 1981 (19 years earlier), coming out of a meeting with the then Italian Health Minister, you sent a note to your client Philip Morris indicating that the Minister had agreed politically to back an attempt in Parliament to reverse the prohibition of advertising of tobacco products in Italy if

the bill explicitly included the ban of all indirect advertising, and that the media would accept only direct informative advertising pre-approved by a government-nominated commission.”

I was shocked. How the hell did he know? From the very first day of my relationship with the client we had both agreed to sign every year a reciprocal non-disclosure agreement.

I adopted the usual technique I advise my own clients to adopt: “I am sorry, but the line is dreadful, I can’t hear what you are saying. Please try again in a few minutes.”

Putting the phone down, and after four years of silence, I called my Italian PM interlocutor, but could not reach him.

A few minutes later the journalist called again and I admitted that the incident he mentioned sounded familiar, but I was not sure of the date. Of course, was he aware that the project never proceeded because the tobacco industry backed out of the arrangement?

“Yes,” he replied, “I know that, but what I don’t know is why. Would you care to tell me?”

I answered, “How do you know all this? What is your source?”

“What? You mean, you don’t know? I can’t believe it. Philip Morris agreed with the US Congress some months ago, in exchange for a 500 million dollar-rebate on a billion-plus dollar fine, to release on a publicly-accessible website all of its international marketing and public affairs documents for the last thirty years!”

I gulped and came up for air. “What is the url?” I hesitantly inquired. He gave it to me.

I quickly closed the conversation saying that the real reason that project never went through is that when Philip Morris had authorised me to test the waters, the company was sure that it would never have been accepted. When they learned from me that indeed the proposal had legs, they had second thoughts and decided that indirect advertising was more powerful and persuasive than direct advertising and asked me to abandon the project, which I begrudgingly did.

I turned off the phone, opened my PC and searched the internet to see what had been posted. I digitised my name, the name of my company, the CDIT,... and a few thousand documents came up.

Terrified, it took me hours to go through twenty years of my life, there, for everybody to see, and wrote down on a piece of paper the more embarrassing and unethical episodes I had been involved in. At the end of the exercise my piece of paper had about twenty items, of which only two were totally unacceptable and inexcusable.

To make things worse, only a few weeks earlier I had been elected chairman of Ferpi, the Italian Public Relations Federation, and it would have been highly embarrassing for me if the news broke out unguarded. I had a number of enemies that I imagined would have been very happy to use bits of information out of context against me.

I decided to act quickly:

- a) I fired off a letter of resignation as the Chair of the Association, explaining the situation and revealing the url;
- b) I wrote three open letters to the editors of *La Repubblica*, *Il Corriere della Sera* and *Il Sole 24 Ore*, the three most important Italian dailies at the time. The letter briefly told the story and published the url in order to give everyone access and avoid that the contents be used against me out of context. The letter was published, a couple of articles came out, nothing really harmful, and that was it.
- c) Of course I also spoke with a friend, who was a lawyer. He told me I could sue the pants off Philip Morris for having breached 20 years of reciprocal non-disclosure agreement and be rich for the rest of my life. This I never did, as I cannot think of any other organization from whom I have learned so much; I am still grateful to them today.

Chapter 5: The Seventies

Now, let's backtrack a few years, to 1976.

I was heavily involved with that year's political elections, helping the socialist left faction in Milan win a couple of seats, despite the party's overall performance being quite poor.

The latter led to the (then) secretary De Martino's leadership being overthrown, and a 'young turk' from Milan's socialist right wing, Bettino Craxi, obtained the position. I had never liked him, and the feeling was mutual.

Torn between the need to make a decent living and my political activities, as well as a growing amount of time dedicated to FERPI, not to mention my responsibilities as a husband and father of three, I decided to use my disappointment for Craxi's new leadership as a reason to retreat from militant political activity.

I resigned from the party, blaming my incompatibility with the current situation, and decided to form a new PR consultancy with my brother Alex, as well as Furio, Ghigo, and Gianpaolo plus Alberto Franchella, a bright and young professional attracted by the success of our small MFcommunications outlet.

SCR Associati

So, in 1976 the six of us formed *SCR Associati* ('SCR' stood for Strategy, Communication and Research) and we launched it with an advertising campaign ("*date a Cesare quel che é di Cesare*" – 'to Cesar what is Cesar's').

The new company was an instant hit; in a couple of years we were Italy's most reputed and largest PR company.

That was when my marriage fell apart.

In my dealings with Ferpi, the professional association, I had met a colleague, Patrizia Antonicelli, with whom I unexpectedly fell in love. It is difficult, as I write this, and even after so many years, to dissect the components to explain this turn of events.

I had been faithful to Matilde (only a couple of innocent 'distractions' spring to mind) for some 15 years. Yet, Patrizia was a fascinating and intellectually stimulating colleague. Her late father Franco Antonicelli had been one of my (political left) role models and thus I was already open to being seduced by his intelligent daughter.

As if in a daze, I did not think twice about what I was doing, nor of its consequences on others. I simply packed my bags and left home.

When I discovered that my attempts to have SCR selected by international PR agency Edelman as its Italian affiliate were failing, because Patrizia's company stood a strong chance to be chosen instead, I convinced her to merge hers with SCR; effectively, that made Patrizia the seventh partner in our agency; we would all be Edelman affiliates!

The consequences of my departure from home were devastating for Matilde, as well as for my three children. Certainly, this was the decision of my life (*'ba, glow worms...*) which would be most hurtful to those dear to me.

My entire being was engulfed into Patrizia's body and mind, and so it remained for a full ten years.

Together and intricately inseparable, for a full decade we ran a memorable marathon: sexual, professional, intellectual.

While she looked after many clients, I focused on diversifying SCR's activities.

Methodos

In 1978, convinced that the Italian management community did not fully understand the need for public relations, we invested in the inception of Methodos, a horizontal leadership skills management training start-up, run by Giorgio Del Mare whom I had met in the early Seventies when he interviewed me on an human relations consulting assignment during my Fabbri experience.

Over the years, our initial 50% stake in Methodos reduced progressively to zero, as we had agreed to sell shares every time a new partner came in to strengthen the company. It was a great success, which gave much gratification to all involved.

More or less at the same time, in order to have a base in the then-booming Veneto region, we created Errepidue Veneto, a PR consultancy, in partnership with a local colleague from Vicenza, Luisa Bandini.

A couple of years later, following the need to have a publishing arm, we created 'Seci' (a range of editorial tools for corporate communication) together with our partner Alberto Franchella, who became its managing director.

In the meantime, my brother Alex left SCR to go full time with the Swiss Cheese Consortium, while Ghigo Roggero had also left the company to focus on his university activities and preferred to go solo. Eventually, Alberto Franchella also left SCR taking Seci with him in a share swap, and went on to become a competitor.

Chapter 6: The Eighties

In the early Eighties, as environmental scanning and reporting, scenario planning, public affairs and crisis management had become our major areas of business, we created Intermatrix Italia with a group of excellent British social and political analysts (Matrix ltd: Jan Dauman, Jeffrey Morris and Dick Van den Bergh) and Italian economists and sociologists like Renato Mannheimer, Antonio Martelli, Mario Unnia, Enrico Finzi and Gadi Schonheit.

Also, as research was becoming more and more an essential feature of our interpretation of Public Relations as a practice, we created, together with Carlo Erminero (at the time head of the highly reputed Demoskopoea research company), the first tele-polling company: *Telecontatto*.

It was a veritable flurry of companies, all successful businesses that put us at the core center of Italy's intellectual and managerial communities making us attractive to organizations of all sizes and sectors. The market was booming and we were leading it from all points of view: innovation, size, income, profits, reputation and visibility.

In the early Eighties we found ourselves directly involved in a memorable series of events which led to a restructuring of Italy's financial services industry. In 1982 banker Roberto Calvi, CEO of Banco Ambrosiano, was found hanging from a rope off a Blackfriars Bridge in London.

Calvi and the Banco Ambrosiano

We were then working for Orazio Bagnasco, a much-talked about Catholic financier, highly successful with his heavily-advertised real estate investment fund business (Europrogramme) and owner of the famous Ciga chain of luxury hotels.

Bagnasco was an attractive and seductive personality, a great marketeer and excellent salesperson and challenging on many cultural issues. Although the two of us were very different, we got along quite well and, as the news of Calvi's murder by the mafia broke out (as it was later proven, his death could never have been suicide), I was persuaded by his reasoning and we worked together on a strategy to avoid the Banco Ambrosiano's activities be 'frozen' by a commissioner named by the Governor of the Bank of Italy, whilst at the same time, publicly and privately supporting Bagnasco (already one of the Bank's board of directors) in his desire to become the new Chairman.

A very ambitious plan indeed.

Bagnasco's main advantage was his very close relationship with Giulio Andreotti, the sacred figure head of the then ruling Catholic Party.

His main enemy, though, was the daily paper *La Repubblica* and the vicious attacks he was receiving from business editor Giuseppe Turani, who kept challenging his real estate investment fund (which had begun to plunge in value); the very close relationship between Eugenio Scalfari, the newspaper's editor and backer of Turani's campaign, and Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, the then Governor of the Bank of Italy (and ultimate decision maker) also worked against our plan. Ciampi would, later in the Nineties, become Prime Minister and, in the early years of the new century, President of the Republic.

One of those days my client and I were chatting outside, in the small square in Milan under the Banco Ambrosiano Headquarters near Piazza della Scala, when we saw Calvi's private secretary, who was well acquainted with her boss's links with the Mafia, and was to be interrogated by the investigators that same afternoon, jump out of the window of the fourth floor to her death. It was a sight that will never leave my memory.

Bagnasco advised me that his friend Andreotti had agreed to endorse his plan, but only if we proved able to neutralise *La Repubblica's* nefarious influence and get my client to receive an invitation for an audience with the Governor.

In the meantime, news about the Ambrosiano case and Bagnasco's intentions were all over the place; specifically, *La Repubblica* was rooting for the Banco's activities to be 'frozen' by the Governor.

I knew Scalfari well and was aware of his sudden passions. So I decided to use one of my 'trump cards' with him on this occasion.

When the Scalfagiuro (already mentioned) finished in 1976, Scalfari and I agreed that he would give me his undivided attention on a maximum of three cases related to my professional activity.

I was confident that if Bagnasco and Scalfari were able to meet and chat for some time they would get on very well. I also decided to keep my old friend, the business editor Turani, out of this. I went to see Scalfari (he knew, of course, that I was representing Bagnasco) and asked him to receive my client privately. An appointment ensued.

I also went to visit the Governor's private secretary and asked him to schedule an appointment with my client, possibly on the same day and before he would meet Scalfari. That, I obtained too, to my delight.

One can only imagine the tension experienced on the day the two appointments had been scheduled.

Bagnasco was in Rome in his suite at the Grand Hotel (one of the flagships of his Ciga hotel chain). There were no mobile phones at the time, and I had remained in Milan to deal with the ongoing media assault. The appointment with the Governor was scheduled at 5pm and the one with Scalfari at 6.30pm. We rehearsed both encounters many times, on the previous day, in Milan.

I figured that the meeting with Ciampi would be short and formal, so I started to call the client at the Grand Hotel at about a quarter to six. There was no reply and no one knew where he was. I figured the first meeting might have taken longer and at 6.45pm I called Scalfari's secretary to see Bagnasco were there, which was confirmed.

I began to bombard the Grand Hotel with phone calls after seven, and finally got through to my client. He seemed irritated by my call: I asked: “how did it go?”. He responded with a short “very well”, and added that he was in a private meeting with Andreotti.

I exulted and, as we had agreed during rehearsals, leaked to a newswire service that my client had been received by the Governor. No mention, of course, of the Scalfari encounter.

The next morning I was at my desk in Milan very early (there was no internet then, but only wire services).

All the daily papers had prominent news of the meeting at the Bank of Italy and suggested that the Ambrosiano story would be quickly solved, which is the result we had focused on.

La Repubblica had a fantastic editorial signed by Scalfari, in which he praised my client as the best possible candidate from the Catholic side, to sort out the Calvi mess.

It was before 7.30am, and as I was reading those news with triumphant joy, I heard the ticking of my wire service and saw the issued news as it was being typed by Ansa (the National press agency): it said that the news of the meeting was false and that the Governor had never received my client.

Shocked, I woke up my client and asked him what the hell had been going on, and told him of the Governor’s statement. He yawned and said: “oh yes, I did not tell you, his Secretary had called me at 4.30 pm to cancel the appointment.”

“But you said everything went well!” I panicked.

He replied, “I could not elaborate as I was speaking to Andreotti, but was actually referring to the Scalfari meeting...”.

I immediately typed and released by fax a statement signed by me, as Bagnasco’s spokesperson, confirming the Governor’s statement and saying that it had been my personal mistake, in the hope of minimising the issue.

It did not work.

Scalfari was absolutely furious and the next morning he wrote a second editorial under the title “A carpet merchant.”

That was the end of my client’s ambitions: the Banco Ambrosiano’s activities were frozen, the real estate funds collapsed and my client never became Chairman of the Ambrosiano.

Of course it had been my mistake. I was so excited about it all that I never questioned the extent of Bagnasco’s “very well” statement whispered down the phone.

Ah, the power of PR. Another lesson learned: never trust yourself and always double-check in tense situations.²

Berlusconi and Publitalia 80

Speaking of tycoons-to-be, in 1980 Silvio Berlusconi had created Publitalia 80, a company whose mission was to sell advertising space for his holding company Fininvest's various private television channels.

Publitalia 80 CEO Marcello Dell'Utri asked both me and my friend Antonio Pilati - who would later become a senior member of the National Communication, and afterwards the Antitrust Authorities (today, he is on the Board of Directors of RAI, the national television company) to support his efforts in creating the best services company in Italy.

Little did I know at the time that Berlusconi would become a recurring nightmare, not only for me but also for many others, nor that Marcello Dell'Utri would be sentenced to jail for being the go-between for Berlusconi and the mafia.

For three years I was Publitalia's consultant and concentrated my activities on explaining and arguing the benefits of a 'culture of service' and the value of relationship governance with stakeholders. We developed a model based on the importance of developing effective relationships as parts of complex interactive networks.

At the time I had no notion that in 1992/94, the first Republic would collapse with all its political parties under the *Mani Pulite* ('clean hands') scandal, and that Berlusconi would decide to move his entire management group directly to the technical and political leadership of Forza Italia (the new party he founded and that would win the '94 elections) by adapting that very 'service culture' model to his political approach to the second republic.

I distinctly remember a brief encounter in the middle of the 1994 electoral campaign with Berlusconi, Marcello Dell'Utri and Fininvest's CEO (Fedele Confalonieri), with the latter saying to me: "you see, we learned from your lessons of ten years ago."

In later years (1999), advised (or so he professed) by his friend and business partner, Vladimir Putin, Silvio Berlusconi theorised in a few speeches and interviews, what he himself termed as the "cuckoo model of Public Relations".

Here is what he said: "Being open, understanding others, and friendships are the pillars of the cuckoo policy, a term that I had first learned from my friend Vladimir Putin and of which I am a very proud implementer. This is an effective policy that evokes a friendly relationship based on empathy, and - where there is friendship - it is easier to make and carry out grand decisions and resolutions."

² This episode, in the context of a paper I wrote in 2013 for the International History of Public Relations Conference that is held every year at Bournemouth University, was fact checked 30 years later, and revealed to be inaccurate. If interested, the reader can read this paper in the Appendix section as an opportunity to ponder over the whole point of this exercise.

“My cuckoo model implies,” he continued, “an attempt to understand others, one by one. My governments have done much to solve major international and national issues by a simple phone call and by reducing difficult and complicated political and bureaucratic barriers. The model implies a policy that stimulates in others friendship, esteem and empathy, a policy by which I have obtained many effective results..... A policy based on personal relationships, often on friendship and sometimes on affection for other political leaders.”

To quote only two of the dozens of memorable episodes related to Berlusconi’s international activities:

- A day before an official encounter with the Obamas in the USA, Berlusconi was seen as he was privately rehearsing in front of a mirror an expression of sexual admiration for Michelle Obama by extending his arms wide with a great smile on his face as if to say, with a full-blown ‘Italian macho’ expression, “what a great piece of a*** we have here...”; this is exactly what he did the following day, to Mrs Obama’s visibly outraged and puritan reaction. That made the world’s headlines.
- As he was preparing to receive Gheddafi, during one of the dictator’s official visits to Rome, Berlusconi sought the advice of an expert to be shown how to kiss the Libyan leader’s hand in deference; which he did, to the shock of the international community.

He is certainly, as many say, unpredictable; but nobody can accuse him of improvising.

IBM and Steve Jobs

IBM Italy was a client in the early Eighties and we were very proud of working for this fantastic company. Our main point of contact was Alberto Beonio Brocchieri, a highly-respected professional who also became a good friend. One day, in 1984, I received a phone call from California from Regis McKenna, the reputed communication consultant credited also for having later created the Silicon Valley story.

He asked me if I could be interested in working for Steve Jobs in Italy.

I immediately called my friend at IBM and he clearly told me that it was either one or the other, because of the conflict of interest. It was a difficult decision because the attraction of working for Jobs was irresistible.

I had poured over his early years and the legend he’d become, and thought of Luca Mortara, a young, brilliant, technically-competent and sufficiently ‘out of the box’ professional who was then working in Arci (the Italian ‘lefty’ cultural and leisure organisation) as an ideal man to appeal to Jobs.

Luca and I went to pick up Steve Jobs at Rome's private airport and, as the young wonder-man came skipping down the ladder of his private plane wearing jeans and a t-shirt, he stopped and looked at Luca, all dressed up for the occasion in the first ever blue suit he had ever worn... and said: "you must be an IBM-er!"

Many years later Luca, today a successful entrepreneur, confessed that that episode had been the greatest blunder in his life. Yet he recovered very quickly and assisted with Jobs' PR requirements in Italy for a number of years.

During his first visit to Italy Steve wanted very much to meet and speak with Gianni De Michelis, a powerful socialist politician and then Minister of State Participations. Steve was curious as Gianni was the only member of the government whose cultural and political platform acknowledged the growing relevance of computer technology and was trying to act upon it by finding a role for computer technology in education: that was one of Jobs' pet strategies.

I had a long-standing relationship with Gianni and he was thrilled when I asked him to join Steve for a private dinner at Rome's Grand Hotel. When I asked him if he needed an interpreter he declined, as he would come with one of his girlfriends, who was American.

In fact, dinner was an embarrassing affair as Gianni spoke no English, but the two got along famously and kept in contact for a long time. An interesting consequence of that evening was that one year later I received a call from Gianni's aide inviting me to a talk the Minister was going to give to a group of visiting senior American CEOs. I didn't want to accept but the aide insisted that Gianni really wanted me to be there. I went and was shocked to learn that his English had become almost fluent, with a strong Neapolitan accent (although the Minister was from Veneto, a different region). As he spoke he looked in my direction many times; he came up to me as he concluded and said: "you see? I decided to learn and practise, following that ghastly experience with Steve Jobs."

Moving towards integration

At some stage in the mid-Eighties, notwithstanding my intense and excellent relationship with both Dan and Richard Edelman, and also following an unfortunately aborted project to open a 50/50 share consulting company in New York aimed at serving Italian companies in that market, SCR decided to leave that network, principally because we were convinced that the future of PR would be in its integration with other communication disciplines (at the time, and way before digital became a key word, it was all about advertising, direct mail, promotion and sponsorship), while the Edelmanns remained faithful to Public Relations as an independent and autonomous discipline.

However, we have recently seen the Edelmanns move forcefully into the space-buying business as well as work with sponsored contents, but directly and not by becoming a part of an advertising-led conglomerate, as all the other major companies of the Eighties did.

During this time (1984/1986) – as James Grunig and his colleagues had started working on the *Excellence Project* in the USA that would lay the conceptual grounds for the future of Public Relations, SCR was going well and we felt the need to provide our many new and young employees with a conceptual framework, better to understand processes, motivations and operational structures; therefore, I asked four of our six business unit managers to take

off a couple of months from their day-to-day activities and review the last 60 projects the agency had executed (regardless of client or issue) to see if there were common grounds and elements to the implementation processes followed.

We sought the common denominators of our basic activities.

Gorel (governance of relationships)

This was, rather than a normative one, as descriptive and bottom-up approach, which led to the development of the first *Gorel* ('Governance of Relationships) scrapbook process, with a view to use it to also evaluate and measure the results of our work.

I would never have imagined (even considering the many adjustments and significant updates that have since been introduced to the Gorel approach) that this would become a small, but nevertheless generally recognised approach to our profession.

In its basic form, this 'scrapbook' helps an organisation define its mission (what it does, what it is about), its vision (where it wants to be within a certain period of time), its guiding values (which drive the organisation's actions from 'mission' to 'vision'), its strategy (the selected path to implement that very migration) and its tactical objectives (which enable the strategy).

We argued that if these points were not clear as the Public Relations professional begins to operate, he/she should insist that they be, also advising and supporting that very process within the client/employer.

Then comes the selection of key stakeholder groups (the so-called 'active' stakeholders because they are not selected by the organisation, they decide themselves to hold a stake, are aware of the organisation's strategy and interested in playing a part in its implementation... whether positive or negative).

As the organisation selects tactical objectives to pursue its strategy, it identifies potential stakeholders for each of those tactical objectives: those are the publics who would be interested in playing a part in the implementation if they were made aware of the specific objective being pursued.

Clearly the communication mode changes: with active stakeholders it is about 'pulling', with potential stakeholders, at least initially, it is about 'pushing', and this produces significant consequences for the economics of public relations.

Finally, one identifies *opinion leaders*, selected by the organisation because they are believed to be influential in disseminating arguments in support of the achievement of those objectives; and *issue influencers*, who have both a direct and indirect influence on the dynamics of the external issues (regulatory, social, technological or of the market itself) that impact on those objectives.

All these different publics often overlap and need to be carefully listened to before the implementation phase.

So far, we are talking about a management process that involves many other functions in the organisation, not just public relations.

At this point the Public Relations professional prepares arguments, contents and selects communication channels and tools to open a dialogue and/or get involved with any those publics, by also providing and incentivising feedback.

However, before pressing ‘go’, the professional undertakes a test on a representative sample of a specific public to understand both the communication potential and quality of the content itself (credibility of both source and content, plus familiarity with the latter) and the strength of existing relationships (levels of trust, commitment, satisfaction and the balance of power within a specific relationship).

The results of this test also allow the professional to set specific communication and relationship objectives to be achieved in any given time, within available human and financial resources, and allow him/her to negotiate and agree those objectives with the employer/client.

After roll-out, a post-check is implemented with another representative sample of the same universe, along the same lines as the original test, and one can therefore measure the program’s effectiveness.

This process has been revised many times following its inception, and has always proven to be a strong support to professionals who apply it.³

Moving on with SCR Associati

Having left Edelman, in the mid-eighties we got involved with Ogilvy and Mather; the agency had just developed the concept of ‘*orchestration*’, which sounded somewhat less pretentious yet more intelligent than the ‘*whole egg*’ of Young and Rubicam’s philosophy, which had a similar meaning.

Ogilvy’s Italian head was Giancarlo Livraghi, a brilliant, thoughtful and creative professional with a solid academic background.

We sniffed around each another with canine curiosity and agreed that Ogilvy and Mather would buy a 20% stake in SCR and there would be a call option after two years. At the same time we set up a 50/50 consultancy, called Sintonia, for joint, integrated projects using resources from both companies.

³ At the Bled Symposium of 2013 I presented a paper in which I introduced my vision of the ideal, integrated components of what I define as a PR infrastructure; this also contained an updated version of the *Gorel* process. The interested reader may see this paper in the Appendix. A few months later (December 2013) Palgrave Macmillan, the academic publisher, published *The Global Stakeholder Relationships Governance: An Infrastructure*. It features chapters written by myself, James Grunig, Emilio Galli Zugaro and Joao Duarte.

I decided to leave the helm of SCR to Patrizia and move over to lead Sintonia, the new joint venture. In our effort to analyse and process activities, we identified the basic essence of the (then) four distinct and established communication practices: advertising, direct response, promotion and public relations.

For each we selected indicators and the characteristics that made each practice unique. Then we began to experiment, evaluate and measure. It was all very exciting and promising.

Yet these changes more or less coincided with Patrizia's desire to cool off our relationship as she was becoming actively interested in other men. I was hurt by this but did not do anything to make matters worse, being fully aware that the success of our relationship was behind our success in the marketplace.

As we approached the end of the two-year trial period with Ogilvy it became clear that there was a clash of personalities (both Giancarlo and I being strong characters) and that SCR was not doing as well as before.

So I decided to recall our agreement with Ogilvy and, well aware that my relationship with Patrizia had come to an end, we jointly and consensually began to look for other international business partners in order to ensure a future to the company without being committed to work in the same place and country.

In 1987 we signed an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) to sell 100% of SCR to Burson Marsteller.

Patrizia would continue to run the Italian arm that would remain separate from the existing BM Italy, whilst I would move to New York as senior vice-president (Practice Development) of BM worldwide.

I had already moved when the three brightest young consultants from SCR suddenly resigned, attracted by Giancarlo Livraghi's proposal to join Sintonia after our break-up.

I will never forget the moment Harold Burson walked into my New York office, one early morning, saying: "Toni, we seem to have a problem..."

I took the first flight to Milan but did not manage to change their mind.

Burson, understandably, bowed out of the deal and we began a discussion with Hill and Knowlton's CEO Robert Dilenschneider. We struck a deal by which Patrizia would remain in Italy and I would move to London as the business's European head.

The two of us met with Robert one morning in Amsterdam to sign the contract, and it was only then that we discovered that he had brought with him another Italian, Claudio Belli (whom I did not have much time for), announcing that he had just appointed Belli as the new European head of the business. Back to square one.

We ended up selling to UK company Shandwick (its CEO was then Peter Gummer) on a three-year earn-out program. Patrizia would stay in London as Vice-President at the Head Office, and I would remain at SCR's helm in Italy. It was 1989.

Patrizia moved to London, but after a good first year she endured a bad one, which led her to return to Milan and open an American Indian artifact shop, that culture being her most durable passion.

After a short stint as head of Fleishmann Hillard in Milan, she now lives in Santa Fé, New Mexico, where she runs a niche cultural tourist agency for wealthy, sophisticated Europeans who are interested in the native American culture of which New Mexico is particularly rich.

A few months following our deal with Shandwick in 1989, worried that Burson in Italy might overtake us as number one on the market, our UK shareholder obliged us to acquire another public affairs and lobbying *boutique*, called IncomNews, to strengthen our position.

I did not agree with this move and stepped down as CEO, replaced by Furio. However, I remained on the board of directors and looked after my best clients, obviously because of our three-year deal and the earnout program.

When we integrated Incomnews into SCR we immediately understood that a huge anti-AIDS education contract they had signed with the Health Ministry weeks before the merger, was significantly debatable from an ethical perspective.

This could not be changed, short of dropping the account (and our shareholders would not allow us to do so, for fear that Burson Marsteller would overtake us). So we decided to ask one of our best partners, Giampaolo Gironda, to manage the troublesome account.

When, a few months later, the news broke out that Incomnews had paid a commission to obtain that contract, and Giampaolo even spent a couple of days into a milanese prison, Furio and I never felt so miserable.

Here was one of our original partners and one of our best friends, dragged into jail only because we had asked him to do his best managing a difficult account. The scandal dug deep into our company's reputation, our profession's reputation and our own personal one. What a terrible, terrible mistake.

My major and long-standing clients from the Eighties to the mid-Nineties were the international tobacco manufacturers, American Express and AT&T.

These clients I continued to manage, well after the AIDS scandal, to reciprocal advantage.

A few of the many exciting projects we carried out with American Express spring to mind:

We were the first, in 1982, to be involved with an experimental, nationwide cause-related marketing project with Italian WWF and publisher Rizzoli as media partner dedicated to raising funds through merchants to preserve Italian coasts from pollution and devastation, as a pilot test before the New York head office decided to launch the 1983 restoration project of the Statue of Liberty.

A purely tactical tool - devised by Jerry Welsh, a Russian language professor, then Amex's Head of Marketing – cause related marketing is now being adopted by thousands of companies everywhere in the world: to induce local restaurateurs and shopkeepers to accept the green card, despite higher commissions, the initiative intends to raise

demand through direct communication, informing cardholders that if they dined or shopped in a specific place and paid with their American Express card, the latter would make a donation to the same cause. It is now a specific and established marketing tool and also taught in universities.

In the mid-Eighties, as our client was attempting to strengthen its relationships with the Italian banking industry, we organised a two-week tour of twenty managers from major Italian banks to Fort Lauderdale in Florida where Amex housed its substantial customer call center. In those years, call centers were still an absolute novelty for Italian organisations and Amex was way ahead of the pack, even in the USA.

In the late Eighties the company decided to introduce a new service to its corporate clients thanks to which, by detailed reporting and benchmarking (not unlike the cloud computing services available today) they could control and keep an eye on those ever-expanding travel expenditures that had in the meantime soared as a trend.

We commissioned research that showed little concern for those expenses amongst management and argued, in the business media, through management consultants and US-based case histories, the need for a new function (a ‘travel manager’) advocating the size of savings which could be obtained.

We then enrolled some volunteer companies and launched a ‘Travel Manager’ professional association that still exists today.

The Italian process was then adapted and used in many other countries.

Whilst acting as a consultant for AT&T, I came across a management process worth mentioning: SCR represented, mostly, AT&T’s public affair needs in Italy.

Frank Ovaitt was then the International Head and my direct contact there. Frank is now CEO of the Institute for Public Relations, the most active international center of research in the sector. In the late Eighties and early Nineties Frank succeeded in positioning Public Affairs staff and activities, as a line function. The implication of this was that all our activities were constantly monitored and reported through to the bottom line, with a profit and loss methodology.

It was a very interesting experiment, though that was the last time I came across it during my practicing as a consultant.

Concluding the sale of SCR Associati

In the summer of 1987 (I had broken up with Patrizia, but we were still working in the same company) I took a vacation to the United States with my old friend Chicco Testa (the founder of the Lega Ambiente, the Italian environmental movement that went back to the late Seventies, who was then a member of Parliament, subsequently chair of the major electric company ENEL, and today financier for Rothschilds).

When we flew to San Francisco from Chicago we rented a car and drove down the wonderful Pacific coast, via Big Sur (where I visited the places where my teen years hero, Henry Miller, had retired to die), to Santa Barbara where we were guests of the urban sociologist Guido Martinotti and his wife, the noted Greek and Roman law professor and best selling author Eva Cantarella. Guido was staging seminars at the sociology department of the University of California nearby. I was an old friend of his but had never met Eva.

When we arrived we met another couple, who was also staying with them.

He was Claudio Signorile, a well-known politician whom I had been close to when I belonged to the Socialist Party, and she was Simona Colarizi. I had never met Simona, although I knew of her as she had been Riccardo Lombardi's favourite historian (Lombardi, a giant of Italy's struggle against fascism, was my political hero and leader, when I belonged to the Socialist party).

Simona was (and is) stunningly beautiful and charming, one of the most reputed Italian contemporary historians, warm, friendly and very thoughtful of others.

Unfortunately she left after a couple of days, to continue her vacation with Claudio in Baha California, but I dotted down her phone number and address in Rome. When I returned, I looked her up and began a pretty intense courtship. She lived then, as now, in Piazza Campo dei Fiori, one of the most beautiful spots in central Rome, and I lived in Milan, but travelled to Rome at least once a week. We dined together a few times.

Her conversation was fascinating, her vision of the world exciting, her mannerism charming, and her intellect, captivating. I began to read her books and also discovered a great writer, which does not usually go hand in hand with being an academic: at the time she taught contemporary history at the University of Naples and would commute from Rome a couple of times a week, now she teaches at the Sapienza University of Rome.

She was my ideal both intellectually and as a woman; she also showed an interest in my profession, and I did my best to explain.

We liked each other, but were cautious about how the relationship may develop: we both felt that it could be more important than we were prepared to admit. She had been close to Claudio for many years and I had just exited from a ten-year relationship with Patrizia. Certainly neither of us felt it would be a one-night stand.

In the early winter I went to visit some British relatives in the Chianti area while she was in Florence for an academic conference. I asked her to join me in a bar in central Florence, arrived there about ten minutes before the appointment only to discover that the bar had closed a year before (it was *Doney's*). No matter: she was already there waiting for me. This I considered an important sign: not because she was clearly as anxious as I was to meet, but mostly because I discovered, while we were trying to justify each other's eagerness, that we both had the same syndrome: we were never late at any appointment. If anything, we were early.

We had a substantial influence on each other from the very beginning of our relationship.

I continued to commute for business reasons between Milano and Rome.

In the winter of 1989, following the fall of the Berlin Wall, the leader of the Italian Communist Party, Achille Occhetto, launched a public appeal for support in his drive to change the party's name and to open its culture to the new waves of active citizenship that were sprouting from many sectors of society. I was very attracted, and agreed with five other friends (polemist philosopher, Paolo Flores d'Arcais; trade union leader, Antonio Lettieri; Latin poet, Fernando Bandini; intellectual editor of a cultural magazine, Gian Giacomo Migone and the Jesuit priest Father Pintacuda, all much better known than I was), to launch a public Manifesto to raise dormant consciences, through the weekly *L'Espresso* and with strong support by the daily *La Repubblica*.

The success was immediate and raised thousands of positive reactions from all. Facebook, twitter and other social media obviously did not exist yet.

Chapter 7: The Nineties

In February 1990, in a theatre in the centre of Rome, the *Sinistra dei Club* (this is how we identified the movement, following the model that had recently led Mitterand to the French Presidency, i.e. hundreds of ‘clubs of the left’) was born throughout the country, and we staged a first public meeting there.

The entire Communist Party political elite, some angry and wary, others happy, most skeptical, were there in the first three rows, and hundreds of friends and associates gathered too; many of them stood outside in the square, due to lack of room in the theatre.

There was great enthusiasm, positive media coverage, big ideas, inspirational programs and, soon, an excellent relationship with the party secretary and his immediate staff.

We settled and, following a 15-minute speech dedicated to the role of instant communication in the modern, networked society, I was proclaimed coordinator, while Paolo Flores d’Arcais, the philosopher, polemicist and the most public figure, was appointed the movement’s spokesperson.

It was soon a fully-fledged political movement and we also entered directly into the wider electoral referendum committee, led by Mario Segni, a layman and moderate Catholic outsider. Moreover, I was appointed general secretary of the Referendum Committee in representation of all the non-catholic forces (radicals, communists, liberals, republicans) and was part of its political board.

We won the electoral referendum, the first Republic collapsed and traditional parties were dismantled. The outburst of *Mani Pulite*, a campaign against corruption (with cases and people including, sadly, the already mentioned SCR/anti-AIDS case, as well as many of my colleagues from companies and agencies), wiped out almost an entire generation of politicians: a truly unexpected opportunity for the Communist party to accelerate the transition.

But its strong internal resistance to change produced delay in the process and encouraged Silvio Berlusconi –albeit from a right-wing, anti-communist, populist and conservative platform- to profit from the political void and to form his own party (*Forza Italia*) that was also, somehow, based on our model, yet supported by the militant structure of those employees and salespeople from Publitalia (Berlusconi’s company) whom I had helped train ten years earlier, led by my old client Marcello Dell’Utri. Of course, an inordinate level of investment, awareness of the importance of communication and commercial intelligence helped considerably.

We had formed some 300 clubs in the country and, as the web and the digital environment were only used by a handful of nerds, we based our actions on crowdsourcing and long-distance cooperation (email, snail mail and telephone).

It was difficult.

When, in 1992, the old PCI (Communist Party) finally became the PDS (Democratic Party of the Left) I decided not to become a member. Sadly, understanding the impact and relevance of the right timing was never a talent for the Left in Italy⁴ but my decision was also based on other, more personal reasons.

As I arrived in Rimini, where the founding congress was being held, I had already negotiated relevant positions in the new party structure for the more active of our militants (including myself).

In my travel bag I found a letter from my mother (she had followed my developments with great involvement) in which she dissuaded me from having an active part. She argued that it would take at least twenty years of bitter political and economic decline before the old communist/catholic collectivist cultures, based on an evangelical view of poverty as a side-effect of integrity, and which she had detected being engrained even in the best of us, would allow a new liberal and competitive society to emerge, enabling individuals to make their own way without the cronyism that featured so heavily in Italian society.

She also objected to the new party's policy against the American '*Desert Storm*' attack on Iraq, not because of the act in itself – which she believed to be, at the very least, reckless - but because, she underlined, that position would further delay the time of real change in Italy.

Rightly or wrongly, I was very impressed by this letter as it was the first time she had expressed her political views to me so clearly.

When the congress opened, I went to see Occhetto, the leader, and told him I would not become a member, but neither would I do anything to convince others to do the same. Much caution was called for, given the SCR/anti-AIDS case and I wished to avoid embarrassment to the new party leadership team: I made a very short speech at the Congress deliberately, seeking no interest by the media covering the event.

Simona, who had also closely followed my adventure with some trepidation, and had given me time and time again very valuable insights, knowledge and wisdom (she refused to recognise the existence of a public sphere as necessarily better or more virtuous than the political one, and how right she was!) was relieved by my decision.

We loved each other very much. We still do.

So, for the second time in my life (the first, in 1976, was when I had resigned from the Socialist party and formed SCR), I decided to return to my profession full-time.

Clearly I could not, particularly after what had happened with the anti-AIDS campaign account, and its indelible stain on my public reputation, return fully into the SCR operations; also, I could not look elsewhere as I was still on SCR's board of directors and tied to my earnout period.

⁴ In an ICA post-conference held in London in 2013 I presented a paper on 50 years of political public relations in Italy (1963/2013) in which this episode of my life is correlated with other political communication activities of my career. It can be read in Appendix.

This is, more or less, when my health began to deteriorate.

I had always smoked about 20 cigarettes a day since my early teens, and was fully aware (at least since my father's death in 1976) of some blood circulation issues. I was leading an unhealthy lifestyle, with compounded effects from unsuitable food, great amounts of travel, tension, stress, etc...

Life in politics did not help: the moment you leave your seat at the table, someone else immediately takes your place, whether you want it or not.

In any case as my earnout period with Shandwick was about to expire, I also received a clear warning of an imminent heart attack when I was in Brussels. I flew to Milan (at the time I was commuting back and forth between Milan and Rome and had rented a small apartment nearby Simona's house in the latter) and went into a hospital where they examined my arteries. A near-blockage was clearly detected but they could not operate me for a couple of months, unless I went into a private clinic. It was a Friday: I immediately checked into one to discover that a patient due to be operated on Monday had just died.... so I took his place.

In a way, there seemed to be no limit to my luck.

A new lifestyle?

The quick turn of events resulted in a huge scare, a quadruple bypass, a couple of months of rehabilitation, a promise to change lifestyle, and a ban on cigarettes, as well as no more active politics. My lifestyle also shifted its focus to Rome and Simona as my main reference point, with a subsequent move into her house in Campo dei Fiori where I mostly reside today. We also often go to her rented house in the most beautiful spot of Porto Ercole (along the Argentario peninsula in Southern Tuscany, two hours from central Rome). For the record, ten years later I began to smoke again with the alibi that my then and now favourite source of information (the Economist) published a series of articles explaining that nicotine helped offset the incoming of Alzheimer, but the real reason was that not one day has passed by in those ten years with a yearn for a cigarette. Hooked, as they say.

Whilst all this was going on, my children had all grown up; although they will never forgive me for having abandoned them and their mother in their early years, they are still very attached to me, and of course much more so to their mother. Matilde never remarried and returned to her native Rome. I see her once in a while (formal occasions, family Christmas get-togethers, and birthdays).

My son Marco is a molecular biology scientist and full professor at the University of Milan. Very early on in his career, he and his partner Nicoletta Landsberger (with the same academic background) went to the USA for their PHD - she studied at the National Health Institute in Bethesda and he, at John Hopkins in Baltimore. There they had their first child, Alessandro.

Upon their return to Italy, after a few years of struggling to get full academic recognition and the birth of a second son, Pietro, they separated, though maintain a friendly relationship.

Marco has since found a new partner in Lisa, a regulatory affairs specialist within a pharmaceutical company; they have an adorable new baby, Giulia, with blue eyes and red hair.

My other son, Filippo, joined Methodos (the management training and consulting company I had helped form back in 1978) as a young intern, grew quickly within its human resources branch and moved up the ranks. He married, divorced and met Gabriella; they have a son, Federico. Filippo also recently participated to the management buy-out of Methodos (of which more later) and is currently its CEO.

My daughter Marion started a successful career in public relations, first in Milano with Edelman, then Disney Channel and after that, in Paris, with Veuve Cliquot and Ruinart. She currently lives in Paris with Michele, the CEO of a luxury multi-national corporation, and their daughter Alice. Marion has left public relations to open and run L'apprentie Patisserie (the 'learning pastry shop'), a lovely small shop in central Paris where she teaches children and their parents the fine art of bakery.

So, as of today, I am the proud, yet rather absent, grandfather of five children.

A few months following my operation and recovery in December 1994 my mother, sadly, died in Monte Marcello. Today I don't particularly enjoy going there (another example of my '*glow worms*'?) and prefer, when in Italy, to pass my weekends in Porto Ercole with Simona.

My earnout with SCR and Shandwick ended that year. I was living in Rome, and I accepted to continue to follow the international tobacco account until 1996, but set up the non-competitive On-Off Interactive Solutions, a management consulting firm whose mission was to support organisations in understanding the implications for management of the impending arrival of technological convergence, i.e. the integration of telephone, television and the web.

The approach was some 20 years ahead of its time and only innovative and forward-thinking individuals working within large corporate environments proved willing to listen.

My first client was RAI (Radio Televisione Italiana), where I had the support of my friend Luigi Mattucci, Head of Management (and) Learning Processes. Then I worked for MTV, HBO, the BBC and Telecom Italia. They were small but challenging assignments, most of which had mainly to do with managing corporate culture and its development. I learned a lot about the relationship between management and technology.

Methodos

In 1996 Giorgio Del Mare, then CEO of Methodos (the company that employed my second son Filippo and that I had helped start up back in 1978) called me and asked me if I were willing to give up On-Off, merge it into

Methodos in exchange for shares and become its chairman, with the specific tasks of enabling Methodos's some 35 consultants better to understand the value of the Internet.

Of course, as Chairman I would bring my own network of contacts who moved within companies' communication and inter/external relationship functions, thus creating synergies with Methodos's more pronounced human relations/resources leanings.

I had only recently become fully aware that internal and external communication boundaries were dissolving and that a careful alignment between the two was essential effectively to effectively govern stakeholder relationships.

I placed three conditions to the deal: the first was that we would prepare the company so that it could eventually be sold to investors; the second was to introduce women into the (so far) all-male consultant area; the third was that I would remain in Rome and would be in Milan only when necessary.

The reason for selling Methodos was based on the idea that the early consultants of the 1978/1996 period were getting old and that younger ones were not partners, therefore facing an uncertain future until and unless senior partners sold out (which would only happen were they forced to do so).

Since then, we have sold Methodos twice. The first time to a 'quick and dirty' financial holding company that fortunately we succeeded in buying back at a relatively modest cost before it collapsed completely. The second time to Alchimia, another holding company, this time owned by Italian entrepreneur Marina Salamon, who also owned the oldest Italian market research company, Doxa, among others.

Alas, the relationship did not turn out as either party expected, and we both agreed to a management buy-out on behalf of the younger generation of Methodos consultants.

There may have been a clash of personalities (isn't there one everywhere?) but with respect and fundamental honesty, the mission was accomplished: now the totality of Methodos is in the hands of the younger generation.

The company lives on, despite the more recent dramatic debacle of Italy's economy and management consulting market.

While the basis of Methodos business structure still relies on interdisciplinary management training and employee communication like in the mid-Nineties when I re-joined, there are now thriving new business units involved in culturally-integrated thinking, change management and reporting. Our traditional client base of mid-size/large organisations and big professional and trade associations supports us in our intense search for a fully-sustainable model of innovative enterprise; the latter needs to be founded on the communicative organisation model that is needed for the current and future fully-networked society where added value implies an effective governance of relationships with stakeholders.

I do not own shares, and my role is one of coaching the new generation of managers, in exchange for a token fee, much welcome at the end of my long career.

A few of the more challenging and interesting experiences with Methodos come to mind.

In 1997, my old friend Francois de Brabant, who in the early Nineties had initiated 'Reseau', the most advanced telecom think-tank in Italy at the time, and who later became Telecom Italia's Strategic Planning Director, asked me to do a benchmark study on how huge multinational companies conducted their public affairs and regulatory operations, in order to decide whether the two should be integrated into one function or report to different decision makers.

I was fortunate to speak directly with the corporate heads of those functions at IBM, AT&T, Deutsche Telecom, British Telecom and, away from the telecom industry, Italian giant Fiat.

The results of my research were fascinating and totally unexpected: the internal decision-making process (the basis on which companies would plead/advocate with regulators) was so long and drawn-out that, by the time the policy was clear to the day-to-day lobbyists - who liaised directly with public policy decision-makers to influence regulation - it had already become obsolete. Bad regulation was not due to the policy-makers' ignorance (as per traditional stereotype) but to the delays within corporations in selecting the chosen course.

This startling result was of course taken on board by my client as well as by my interviewees. Reactions were various: in Italy, Telecom Italia successfully lobbied to set up an authoritative telecoms platform which had the power to face and modify regulatory issues quickly, removing the need for a full legislative procedure as required by regulations.

At the same time, the company restructured internal decision-making processes which relied heavily on the Brussels office rather than Rome, aligning both locations more closely with the R&D process managers.

IBM, instead, went the opposite way and streamlined its internal decision-making process by centralising it in its Armonk headquarters, rather than in DC, where it was focused before, therefore adopting more of a centralised approach.

A few years later, in 1999, Franco Bassanini, then undersecretary of State to the Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema, asked me to assist in the preparation for Italy's Y2K risk (Millennium Bug) assessment and plans. A special National Committee was set up, directed by Ernesto Bettinelli, a passionate academic from the University of Pavia. Throughout the year, following a successful National Conference announcing the country's emergency crisis plan, we helped in organising ad hoc provincial task-forces led by the local state authorities with economic, social, institutional and technological representatives. These task-forces had the responsibility of updating all computer systems.

Thousands of local managers from the south to the north participated with eagerness. It was the first time, since the post-WWII, that our country was collectively working on one single emergency issue.

Of course we were in constant contact with similar organisations that had been set up in every country of the world. It was truly a great global and local networking experience.

Chapter 8: The Noughties

At the same time, we accepted to support the Mayor of Rome, in agreement with the Vatican, to perform the same task while also preparing for the January 1 beginning of the Jubilee celebrations, that were expected to attract some twenty million pilgrims to the *eternal city*.

It was one, huge double potential crisis management plan, an assignment I could never have envisaged would come my way, one day.

On New Year's Eve, I was mostly trying to ensure that the National Crisis HQs and the Capital's Crisis HQs were networked and connected efficiently. I did not feel that virtual presence from the crisis team HQs was sufficient, so I had also organised for a number of youngsters on their scooters, armed with mobile phones, to go back and forth in the heavy (but excellently managed, for once) Roman traffic.

Of course we all celebrated New Year and the New Millenium the next morning.

In the same year, the Italian Government organised the OECD's Global Social Forum, hosted in Naples.

We worked on the logistics, practical management and media relations of the three-day June event.

The digital divide was then the primary issue of discussion, and official government delegations from 66 nations, mostly from the world's developing countries, were gathered to discuss and structure a global action plan to reduce that divide.

Little did they know what leaps in technology were round the corner, and how many of those discussions would soon become utterly futile.

The Social Forum was selected by activists and Black Blocks (young and violent European troublemakers) as a stage for demonstrations. The government was worried: Enzo Bianco (ex-militant from the Clubs' Left and Minister of Home Affairs at the time), had toughened security around the Forum's venue.

Violent clashes broke out; I had joined as a media consultant to concentrate on the digital divide, the Forum's main subject, but my time was instead mostly dedicated to influence the media into perceiving the activists' violent attacks as a protest against a Left-Centre government hosting a progressive social conference.

My younger colleagues from the activist groups, instead, used intelligent and professional arguments to accuse Italy of being the USA's sidekick, glorifying America-style computer and telecom businesses, in an attempt to convince developing countries to invest the little resources they had to improve their connectivity and their digital literacy.

With hindsight they were right: mobile, wireless and cloud computing have since done more to reduce the digital divide than any other costly infrastructure.

I would meet late in the evening with the activist groups' representatives, to discuss how we would argue our respective positions the next day with more than 200 journalists, who were in Naples to cover the event. I had insisted with the government that our press facilities would be put at the activists' disposal too: when professionals from both sides respect and have a constructive dialogue, tension fades.

As a PR professional, I had another interesting experience, at European level, when Emma Bonino was nominated European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid (the EU agency's name was Echo).

One of the recurring issues was that, although the EU was the world's largest fund provider for humanitarian aid, very few people knew about it, and this was because the small, mid-sized and large Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) that were receiving most of those funds were not willing to publicise those grants. They used the excuse that in many countries the EU was viewed by local governments and institutions as a political power and therefore it was not safe for the NGOs to make public the source of their funding.

This, in turn, created recurrent problems for the EU Commission in the European Parliament as the MPs would criticise the size of humanitarian funds which their constituents were not aware of.

The Commissioner had asked me to look into this, approach the beneficiaries of EU funds and see if an agreement could be reached.

This task gave me the opportunity to start a dialogue with the top management of major international, national, specialised and 'niche' NGOs involved in receiving humanitarian aid.

Following an intense series of meetings and interviews we negotiated a solution by which NGOs would be obliged, in new contracts, to inform Echo whenever they chose not to acknowledge the funds' source, and explain the reasons. They also committed to publicise Echo funding when integrated with their own fund-raising activities by enlisting the help of EU communication services in every EU member country.

More importantly, as one of the weaknesses that emerged from the analysis of most of the national and niche NGOs was lack of communication and public relations skills, Echo decided to set up an ongoing PR academy for their NGO partners.

Another major European program I developed in those years (2002-2008) was Mo.Ve, Mobility Venice. My main client was the Italian Automobile Club, later joined by the Austrian, the Spanish and the Catalonia Clubs with substantial support from the FIA Foundation (International Federation of Automobile Clubs).

I was asked to devise an ongoing program of activities that would secure, at a EU level, a representation of automobile clubs at discussions about sustainable mobility policies related to large metropolitan areas.

The issue was that urban congestion and pollution had created a major sustainability issue across all EU metropolitan areas. There was no common, general policy nor coherent guidelines to address the problem, in order to avoid haphazard decision-making processes at a local, national or regional level.

My good friend Paolo Costa, then the Mayor of Venice, was also President of the European Parliament's commission for transport; the EU commissioner for Transport (the Spanish Loyola de Palacio) was keen to support innovative initiatives in the area of sustainable mobility. Thus, we created a Brussels-based NGO called Mo.Ve (standing for Mobility Venice, that for non experts appeared as blatant contradiction whereas traffic in Venetian canals was a very serious issue...).

A 'scientific committee' chaired by the highly-respected urban sociologist Guido Martinotti (who had welcomed me in Santa Barbara back in 1986, and at whose house I had met Simona) was set up: some 25 interdisciplinary academics (urbanists, architects, transport engineers, sociologists, psychologists, communicators and other scientists) represented academic and research institutions from various EU member states.

These academics participated on a volunteer basis because ours was, at the time, a unique platform to discuss and exchange knowledge on sustainable mobility in metropolitan areas, approached from different cultural and academic perspectives.

The committee members met in Madrid each year in the spring to discuss and decide a specific annual theme, and in Venice in the winter, for a closed-doors Forum in which they would present and discuss their conclusions, recommendations and proposals about said theme with other select European stakeholders, including EU officials and public policy decision makers, active citizenship and environmental groups, business and financial community representatives, regional, local and major city mayors and policy makers, automobile club and other opinion leaders.

Media were excluded to allow frank discussions between participants and stakeholders.

No more than 100 individuals took part in the private Forum. The two-day discussion results were edited, published and quickly gained wide and authoritative circulation amongst the international sustainable mobility community.

With the decisive initial support of Loyola de Palacio and the passion and commitment of the Mayors of Venice and Madrid, Mo.Ve quickly became the principal think-tank on the issue.

The organisation was regularly invited to support the conceptual and specific developments of EU public policy related to sustainable mobility. It also addressed, every year, the European Parliament and participated in various EU study groups; moreover, its more active members were invited to consult Mayors of many large European metropolitan areas (London, Stockholm, Vienna, Paris, Madrid) as well as assist in the early development of new policy approaches by many smaller cities, particularly in eastern Europe and new/potential member states.

The formula combined two lovely locations (Venice is always magic and the Madrid authorities were very generous hosts) with a novel, interdisciplinary approach to solutions, and a 1.0 website that served its purpose very well over the time it was active.

Notably, not only did the Commission decide, with our significant support, to open a ‘green paper’ procedure with the aim of issuing general guidelines for sustainable mobility in metropolitan areas for member states, but included, in these guidelines, the principle of (and operational steps to) stakeholder relationships governance in public policy-making, a major and innovative concept that had been one of the early themes selected and developed by Mo.Ve’s scientific committee.

In parallel, the International Federation of Automobile Clubs selected sustainable mobility in metropolitan areas as its global prime area of activity for 2008 and elected Franco Lucchesi, the Chair of the Italian Automobile Club, initiator and President of Mo.Ve, as deputy Chair of FIA, entrusted with the global implementation of the program.

At this point, in late 2008 and following our suggestion, Mo.Ve, having fulfilled all its initial objectives, closed down.

I have always maintained that if an agreed objective has been reached through a public relations program, then it does not need to go on indefinitely. Sadly many programs do, sometimes because desired objectives are not stated in advance and therefore both the client (if the exercise is enjoyable) and the consultant (if the fees are enjoyable) have every interest in continuing it indefinitely.

This observation brings me to projects specifically aimed at evaluating the quality of stakeholder relationships for two major companies. One began in 2000, and the second in 2002.

Omnitel/Vodafone and Merloni/Indesit

Omnitel was then the second biggest player in what was one of the world’s largest mobile markets.

Its CEO was Vittorio Colao, today CEO of Vodafone worldwide, and his chief communication officer was my good friend Carlo Fornaro, who would then become CCO of TelecomItalia, and is now a consultant.

Carlo asked me help him create a monitoring and evaluation system for all his multi-faceted activities and we devised a quarterly-updated dashboard that would give indications on how the Company was being perceived by the media, the business sector, the academic and cultural sector, customers and public policy-makers.

For each of these segments we created an ad hoc list of performance indicators that addressed both reputation and relationships. An add-on feature of the program was to track the dynamics of the public’s perceptions of the name change from Omnitel to Vodafone. The marketing department had prepared a four-phase plan: from Omnitel to Omnitel Vodafone, then to Vodafone Omnitel and finally to Vodafone. According to our dashboard, the name-change project could move from Omnitel Vodafone directly to Vodafone, skipping two phases; this had a positive impact on financial costs, as the second part of the planned advertising campaign was scrapped.

The dashboard program was quite a costly initiative in itself, but it helped the company grow to a market leadership position. A strategic feature of our program was that management board members agreed to include in their bonus performance standards the measured dynamics of their relationship with monitored stakeholder groups.

Every year, on the basis of the research results, an objective was agreed and at the end of the year we could see if and which manager improved, to reward them accordingly.

A year later, given the results, we received a similar assignment from the Merloni Elettrodomestici company, one of the world's leaders in white goods (washing machines, fridges, freezers etc) with operations in many countries, and listed on the Milan and London stock exchanges. Today, Merloni is known as Indesit and has recently become part of Whirlpool.

This was an excellent platform to develop an internationally-oriented program to evaluate stakeholder relationships in various countries (France, Germany, UK, Poland and Russia, as well as Italy) and to add employee as well as shareholder relationships to the new dashboard.

We adapted the Vodafone experience to the new client, and Vittorio Merloni, who was then the majority shareholder and chairman of the board (for whom I had worked back in the early Eighties when he was chairman of Confindustria - the National manufacturers' association) was the main driver of the stakeholder relationships' quality dashboard.

Andrea Guerra was CEO and later became CEO of Luxottica; Head of Communications was Andrea Prandi, today CCO of Edison.

The members of the management board used relationship quality monitoring as a performance indicator for various functions (communication, government relations, human resources, marketing and finance).

Both programs were later discontinued when Colao rose to Vodafone's Global CEO and Andrea Guerra moved became CEO of Luxottica. Yet today Vodafone worldwide, as well as Luxottica, define themselves as stakeholder companies and are both involved in monitoring the quality of their relationships with stakeholders.

Although identifying and monitoring stakeholders followed distinct processes (in Vodafone's case they were samples of the different stakeholder universes, while in Merloni's case they were identified in agreement with the specific executive managers), the methodology involved a periodic research in which interviewed stakeholders were required to indicate, on a scale 1-10, how they appraised four indicators related to their perceived relationship with the company: trust, satisfaction, commitment and power balance in the relationship.

On to teaching

Back in 1996, I was approached by old friend Giampaolo Fabris, one of Italy's most reputed consumer goods sociologists, who was also Milan's IULM University Public Relations undergraduate course's Director. Fabris is, sadly, no longer with us.

My old friend and SCR-founding partner Ghigo Roggero had always held IULM'S Public Relations chair. Giampaolo asked me if I was willing to be a temporary substitute because of Ghigo's health issues. He also indicated his desire that I take over from him.

I stalled him to speak to Ghigo, who appeared to be unaware of Giampaolo's plans, and the seriousness of his own illness.

Eventually I agreed to take on the course for the 1997-98 academic year. I flew to New York with Simona, went to the Barnes and Nobles bookshop on 5th Avenue, and bought some 50 books, all about public relations. I read them in a retreat on Shelter Island as I began to prepare my course.

Simona was amused by my sudden determination to do a good job as a teacher, no doubt to prove, even if only on a subconscious level, that I could be her equal, though - no matter how good a teacher she was (and still is)- her main interest and passion is to be an excellent writer and political historian.

So, for the next three years, I was adjunct professor of Public Relations at IULM.

I liked being a professor more than I liked being at IULM, so I later accepted to teach in Gorizia, in the northeast of the Italy, at the University of Udine. I chose that University because I was promised by its President that they would deliver to me a fully-tenured professorship after the first two years.

As it happens, they never followed the offer through.

Somewhat disappointed but still passionate about teaching, I was fortunate to have a friend, Gerry Jasevoli, who offered me a teaching position at the Vatican's Lumsa University. It was only a 10 minute-walking distance, across the Tiber from our house in Campo dei Fiori in Rome.

Eight years later, I am still teaching Public Relations at Lumsa. My classes, with more than a hundred second and third year course students are, very enjoyable. Half a dozen of them will stand out with their talent and passion, and I end up helping them in their thesis, steering them towards appropriate post-graduate studies, and follow their careers.

In the same period of time, I have also taught organisational sustainability courses at the Forli section of the University of Bologna, communication at the Sociology department of La Sapienza, and public affairs at the School of Government of the Rome LUISS business school.

In 2006 Simona decided to buy a small apartment in the West Village, New York. While we were looking for it I sent my resumé to NY universities with Public Relations courses as part of their curriculum.

Luckily, (once again), NYU's John Doorley offered me an adjunct assignment for the global relations and intercultural communication course of the Masters in Public Relations and Corporate Communication, which had just started.

Simona loved being in New York where she could focus on her research and writing rather than teaching at the University of Rome. So, when the West Village apartment proved to be too small, we moved to a larger one in the center of the Village, settled there and decided to spend six months in Rome (Sept-Feb), and move to New York at the end of that period, as my university teaching commitments lasted until the end of May.

June would be spent in Rome, whilst I was in New York in July and August, for the summer term. Simona instead preferred to remain in Rome and spend the two summer months commuting between Rome and Porto Ercole, a lovely seaside village not too far away, at her rented house with a tremendous view.

My passion for teaching was thus satisfied the whole year round, while at the same time I was in the fortunate position of being able to support my colleagues at Methodos.

I have tried to rationalise my almost insane passion for teaching, perhaps as a tool to stimulate a critical approach to the profession I have been committed to all my life. I confess to something akin to sexual climax when (often, if not always) I succeed in extracting the best out of a student.

I had never imagined that in the spring of the 2013/14 academic year I would resign from NYU after 8 years of a successful and satisfying career there.

Unfortunately academic director John Doorley had resigned in autumn 2013 and new administration executives with different priorities were introduced into the program.

We decided to use the ‘we agreed to disagree’ expression (maybe another version of my mother’s *glow worms*) and I quit immediately after finishing my last lecture at the completion of the spring 2014 semester.

The sustainability issue

In 2004 my good colleague and friend Ludovico Passerin d’Entreves, CCO at Fiat, asked me if I was willing to embark in the process of preparing Fiat’s first ever social responsibility report.

I had never done one before, but this certainly was not a good enough reason for me to refuse, so I accepted and what an experience that was!

Charismatic CEO Sergio Marchionne had just taken over the leadership of Italy’s largest industrial company and Methodos had some role in the cultural integration of his new management team.

Almost at the same time, the Italian subsidiary of Glaxo Smith Kline appointed us to perform a similar task, as a pilot project that would eventually be extended to the rest of the group.

So, I dived into both theory and practice of organisational reporting and supported both companies in producing their respective first CSR report.

A basic belief I always held dear since the inception of my first consultancy back in 1974 was that among the benefits a serious consultant can bring to an organisation is that of supporting and assisting the client in developing and/or creating their own expertise and practice. I have rarely accepted a client who would not commit to the recruitment of a Public Relations Manager before the end of the first year of our assignment.

Over time, and having (in one way or another) been involved in the recruitment of dozens of Public Relations professionals within clients' organisations, I have cultivated a large number of relationships, which has turned out to be very useful.

Today this happens to be more of a constraint than an advantage, as most of these professionals prefer (and rightly so!) to lean on consultants of their own generation or even younger. But I still treasure their esteem and respect.

In the specific case of my first two sustainability reports, a major satisfaction came from Marchionne himself: when he read the report he noted that the effort was worth much more than its cost, if for no other reason than the top management of the company (not to mention its internal and external stakeholders) was not aware of many of its contents.

Since then, I have concentrated on studying, learning and practising a relatively new management discipline called 'integrated thinking', which inevitably leads to a new communication discipline called 'integrated reporting'.

The first stems from the acknowledgement that decision-making processes in any kind of organisation often suffer a consolidated '*silo approach*' where each function is basically evaluated on the basis of specific objectives, each relying on different, unaligned arrangements which do not communicate with one another.

Also, the entire decision process is often carried out, all the way to its implementation, without identifying and/or listening to the very internal and external stakeholder groups who are aware, attentive, impacted by, or bearing the impact generated by those specific decisions.

Such disconnection delays implementation times, and consequences may therefore often turn negative for the organisation itself.

'Integrated thinking' implies alignment within the different management functions, and articulated listening to specific stakeholder groups before a decision is made. This, in turn, accelerates implementation times and improves the overall quality of the organisation and its creation of valuable results.

In parallel with integrated thinking there is also the awareness that more than 50% of the value created by organisations today pertains to intangibles and that stakeholders demand to receive facilitated access to an organisation's reporting of its own financial, social and environmental actions and behaviours, in order to become acquainted with its clear and comprehensive governance structure.

This has led to a constant and global revision process of organisational reporting as an ongoing concern (not specific, ad hoc reports) in what I call the '*Janus Approach*', after the ancient pagan Roman god with two heads, one body and one blood circulation system.

The two heads refer to the creation of material; intangible values and all-purpose communication is the blood circulation. Fifty per cent of what makes for effective and sustainable communication relies on listening (before, during and after the decision is taken and implemented). All organisations need a function to facilitate and coordinate their many integrated, multi-stakeholder, multi-channel communication processes, applying one set of rules that allows all to understand and relate amongst different ongoing performance indicators.

Professional Associations

In 2000 two old friends, Gherarda Guastalla Lucchini (head of a Milan-based PR agency) and Enrico Cogno, head of a communication school in Rome, separately suggested that I submit my candidature to the Presidency of Ferpi, the Italian Federation of Public Relations.

I had always remained close to Ferpi since its inception in 1970, but the whole decade of the Nineties had been very gloomy for our professional association under an absent leadership, and I was much too involved in developing my private life, my health issues, my political fiascos and my need to find a new way to earn a living.

I decided to accept the candidature following my decision to leave active politics for the second time, after Silvio Berlusconi's entrance in the political arena and immediate electoral success.

Ironically, as mentioned here before, my first exit from politics had been in the mid-Sixties when I resigned from the Socialist party the day that Bettino Craxi became Political Secretary. Craxi would then later become, in the second part of the Eighties, Berlusconi's principal pimp in the political community.

Since then and to this day, first as its President, then as delegate for international relations, and now as a simple yet invasive and engaged activist, I have devoted a lot of energy and resources to the Federation.

I feel I have learned and gained from it at least as much as I have given. I use this argument mostly to convince younger colleagues to join, but very much believe in this. In fact, if there is one major weakness in the professional community to which I belong, and which I have encountered everywhere, it is the fragility and often mischievous mis-management of our professional associations, which also leads to the ever-reducing number of their members.

With the possible exception of Sweden, no single association accounts for even 10% of the professionals operating in any given country.

This is truly a unique situation, causing and being caused by PR's ambiguities, opaqueness and (at times) dodgy reputation.

Unlike other professions, there is no obligation to join a dedicated association, and in those few countries where such obligation exist, professionals just call themselves communicators and therefore avoid membership.

My presidency of Ferpi began in the second part of 2000. I started as I meant to continue, with a strong and public objection to a “Guilded journalists only” clause that had been recently approved by Parliament in a public sector communication bill (bill n.150/2000) that mandate for all State organisations to open, beyond a relationship with publics and spokesperson function also a media relations one reserved only for journalists belonging to the national federation of journalists.

At the same time, I tried to make the best of it by organising, in competition with other public, private and social sector providers, reputable and profitable professional training courses for some of those 40,000 Italian communicators working in the public sector, who were obliged by the new law to follow professional training.

In 2002, in agreement with the Public Functions Ministry, we undertook a joint program to raise the public sector’s awareness of the necessity, for any reform, to nurture a relationship with citizens and their rights and obligations, as the central focus of its activity.

Strong immigration growth in Italy created social and political tensions; in 2003 we initiated a programme targeting both our 1,000 Members and the Italian general public, advocating the cultural richness of immigrants; we argued that organisations needed to consider migrant communities (legal and illegal) as stakeholders, whether in consumer goods, banking, real estate services and basic citizenship issues.

In those years, corporate social responsibility was also beginning to become a household term amongst Italian public relators. The objective of our initiative was to help guide those somewhat confused professionals, in search of accountable, reliable and effective references, and who had recently been entrusted by their organisations/clients to plan, develop and implement CSR communication plans.

On the other hand, the political objective was to develop a specifically communicative, rather than holistic, approach to counteract the perceived risk that CSR be assumed as mere communication. We were to reaffirm the general principle that public relations are effective when they communicate behaviours rather than intentions and that they do not manipulate stakeholder expectations. Such objective was to be fulfilled by publishing a book about communicating social responsibility, in cooperation with an Italian business publisher *Il Sole 24 Ore*.

In 2002 *Il Sole 24 Ore* published my Gorel (Relationship Governance) book, with proceedings going to the Federation. We also initiated a process on the Ferpi website to attract as many comments and suggestions as possible for the second edition, adding on to this a dictionary of typical English/Italian PR terms. It was the first ever crowd-sourcing exercise for a book on PR and the second edition, in early 2005, quickly sold out, just like the first.

A year later I undertook a major research to analyse how Italian journalists perceived the role of public relators and vice versa with scholar Chiara Valentini. The results were published in 2008 by Luca Sossella Editore (“*The shattered mirror*”) together with three DVDs: a total of 12 hours of highly professional video recording of 6 consecutive discussions with around 60 of Italy’s most reputed public relations scholars and practitioners. Its title was “*In che senso? Cosa sono le Pubbliche Relazioni oggi?*” (“*In what sense? What is public relations today?*”). This was done in collaboration with Fabio Ventoruzzo.

In 2009 the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs also entrusted us with the responsibility of organising regular workshops (until 2011) and seminars featuring international speakers for young, mid-career and senior diplomats to acquaint themselves with the concept, the theory and the practice of Public Diplomacy.

The Global Alliance

In 2002, as the current President of Ferpi, one of the 16 national associations of public relations professionals that formed the Global Alliance (today the GA has 67 member associations from as many countries), I was elected founding Chair of the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management.

The truth is that the founding members agreed that we should avoid early Chairs from those considered the most powerful associations (namely the US and the UK). The Canadian representative, my great friend and immediate successor Jean Valin, was not at the time willing to commit, and so I ended up as the only other willing candidate.

Our first project was to develop a comparative analysis of all ethical codes from our 16 member associations and see if there was a common approach.

We decided to update and unify the contents, given the dynamics that our practice was incurring.

President-elect Jean Valin took on the assignment and soon produced a global ethics protocol.

Its most interesting innovation was making clear the concept that when the individual professional believes that their represented interest is in conflict with the public interest, the latter should always be chosen.

The protocol's drafting group had intense discussions over this, including the issue over what 'public interest' is, and how one detects it. Due to the many interpretations, we failed to find a consensus.

Although the Chair and the Chair-elect were in favour of putting the concept (of public interest) into the main text, pressure from the other partners led us to include the clause only into the bylaws.

The interpretation I gave was that the public interest in any specific situation is left to the professional's decision, based on the letter and spirit of existing norms and regulations as well as their interpretation of active citizen groups and their own specific expectations.

The protocol was signed and agreed in Rome in June 2003 by all the member associations.

Each member had one year to amend its own code along the approved lines, and all new members would be accepted only if they agreed to do the same.

We held the first World Public Relations Festival in Rome (the Festival would become 'Forum' in 2008): a biannual event organised by the Global Alliance in cooperation with the nation's association where the event would take place.

Some 400 delegates from all over the world participated to the Rome event.

Another 500 participated in the second Festival, again held in Italy (Trieste) in 2005.

The theme discussed in Trieste was '*communicating diversity, with diversity, in diversity*'.

This was the first time the issue of diversity acted as the main issue of a professional conference and it was a fantastic experience.

The discussion of the three subthemes concluded that:

- a) Diversity is a specific value for Public Relations because technology now allows, at least in theory, to develop not only a one-to-one, but also one-to-few and one-to-many direct relationships;
- b) Globalisation has dramatically increased our understanding of the infinite diversities that exist in contemporary society, and this completely modifies our approach to stakeholder relationships;
- c) Finally, and because of a) , effective communication mandates that we use diverse formats, channels and tools to dialogue with our publics.

The Stockholm Accords

In 2009, John Paluszek, then the Global Alliance chairman, asked me to coordinate a global effort to involve a significant number of professionals and academics in a crowd-sourced investigation into the specific characteristics of value that Public Relations created for organisations and society in the 21st century. The exercise was conceived in an effort to prepare for discussion and approval of the 'Accords' for the Stockholm World Public Relations Forum, June 2010.

This effort, which had never been attempted by any other profession worldwide, was based on the integration of some of the more recent breakthroughs in our body of knowledge and also supplied by other disciplines.

Prof Mervin King - a South African corporate lawyer turned Justice of the Supreme Court, corporate governance counsel to the World Bank and the United Nations, Professor at the University of Pretoria, Chair of the Global Reporting Initiative and more recently of the IIRC (International Integrated Reporting Council) had just issued, in 2009, his 'King 3 Report' which immediately attracted the attention of the corporate governance community worldwide.

Amongst other substantial innovations, the King 3 Report dedicates a specific chapter (Chapter 8) to the concept of governance of stakeholder relationships, and affirms that the Board of elected officials of any public, private or social organisation is ultimately and directly responsible for deciding and implementing policies and programs aimed at developing and sustaining relationships with the organisation's principal stakeholder groups. Board decisions relating to which stakeholder interests the organisations should privilege when in conflict, needed to be *'situational'* i.e. decided on a case-by-case and instance-by-instance basis.

Clearly this recommendation implies the adoption of a full stakeholder model and changes the role of the organisation's public relator (the manager that normally is better suited to listen to stakeholder groups and understand their expectations) into that of an interpreter to the Board, so that the latter may deliver informed decisions for implementation by management.

The King Report in fact suggests that the status of stakeholder relationships should be discussed in every single board meeting.

From South Africa to Sweden: Swedish professor Sven Hamrefors had just completed and published a comprehensive five-year research into Sweden's most effective organisations on behalf of the Swedish Public Relations Association.

The results were collected under the "business-effective communication" report which elaborates on the concept of the "communicative organisation".

This refers to the acceleration of a global "network society" and the "value network" concepts, indicating that organisational value resides in the measurable quality of relationships among members of networks, as well as amongst those networks. Thus, contrary to the traditional Michael Porter's late 1970s concept of the 'value chain' (where organisational value is created in a linear and mostly material process), this more recent, Scandinavian, line of thought attributed the creation of value to the quality of 'fuzzy' relationships.

This implies two roles for the public relator:

- a) A 'political' (Prof. Hamrefors defines it "ideological") role of sustaining, supporting and inspiring organisational leadership in its effort to reinforce its "licence to operate" vis-à-vis both the many value networks, and society
- b) A 'contextual' role of ensuring that all of the organisation's value networks are enabled to improve the quality of their relationships, thus increasing the creation of more value.

These more recent developments (coupled with other important contributions from the Arthur Page Society, the PRSA, the Institute for Public Relations, the global stakeholder relationship governance integration with the generic principles and specific applications' view of Public Relations) led to the very first outline which, accompanied by a statement of intentions, was sent to some 120 carefully selected professionals, scholars, educators and opinion

leaders from 42 countries, inviting them to participate in a two-phase co-creative process that adopted the Cisco Webex Connexia synchronous video conferencing platform, set for January and February 2010.

In the fortnight between the two video conferences, participants were separated in working groups focused on selected areas of interest, in order to continue the discussion and complete a redraft of the first outline, verify the redraft in the second and final videoconference, with the coordinator editing the first draft of the document.

The selection of the invitees followed three indicators:

- 50% professionals (from companies and agencies) and 50% scholars and educators;
- representatives of as many countries as possible and all continents;
- individuals who were expected to be reactive, interested and available for the effort.

The very first outline included six areas of value creation: governance, management, sustainability, marketing, internal and external communication.

There were 42 members participating in the first two-hour videoconference. Half of them spoke directly by commenting and suggesting changes and/or other approaches to the initial statement of intent.

Towards the end of this first exercise six volunteer group coordinators were selected and each participant volunteered to co-operate in at least one of the six working groups for the following two weeks. The role of the groups was to exchange comments, materials and information and re-draft the brief related to that area. Some 80 exchanges were concluded in the allocated time.

We then drafted a first text which was sent to all participants, including those who had not replied to the first call, inviting them to comment and to participate in the second conference call, to be held a few days later.

There was general agreement that while the section devoted to marketing (which participants believed to be going through a radical conceptual overhaul) had not produced significant added value, the distinct issue of the alignment of internal and external communication deserved a section all of its own.

A lively discussion was also held on whether governance and management areas should not be integrated into one and, therefore, if sustainability matters should not also be part of that group.

In the end, it was decided to keep sustainability, governance and management (in that order) as one part of the brief illustrating the value of public relations to society and organisations alike. Both internal and external communication, as well as their alignment, were to belong to another part of the brief illustrating the operational value of public relations.

The second video conference call saw the participation of some 52 individuals; half of them were new.

After two hours of discussion, agreement was reached that the coordinator would edit a first draft of the document, send it to all participants and ask them to respond with variations and suggestions in the following week.

Overall, during this first phase, another 80 modifications were introduced, of a conceptual and a semantics-related nature, in equal measure.

All circulated cases, studies, links and papers referred to during the discussion were collected and added to the materials. The coordinator also prepared a glossary describing, to the best of his knowledge, the intended sense of some of the more relevant terms being used in the brief.

Possibly the most significant innovation achieved focused on the format of each of the six selected areas: a brief statement of the situation, a brief statement of how the communicative organisation acts in that given situation, and a call to action to the Public Relations professional to argue the ways they bring value to the organisation and society.

The second draft was posted for comments on the Forum's website for two months and attracted a couple of hundred comments. A third draft was then prepared, presented and discussed in the two-day Stockholm Forum where some 400 participants from 27 countries participated. Minor changes were introduced from the public discussion before it was finally approved by the Assembly.

I then directly followed the implementation aspects of the Accords in Italy with some 50 of my Italian colleagues (always on a voluntary basis); in over two years, we received an amazing and proven increase in awareness of the value of public relations in the country's business, tourism, education and professional communities.

This is the challenge the Global Alliance accepted in 2009 with the approval of the Stockholm Accords programme. Aware that many of us were uncomfortable with the name given to the Accords' effort ("prXpr program"), we decided to call the Accords, simply, 'BRIEF'.

Personally, I attribute our hesitation in coming to grips with the strong and often negative impact our profession bears on society and organisations to a number of intellectual and conceptual weaknesses. I will cite only the first two that spring to mind:

- a) It was only in 1996 (in Lisbon, and 34 years after the code of Athens) that the code provision by which PR remuneration and bonuses were barred from being linked to results, was eliminated. This was relevant for all who believe that evaluation and measurement are an integral part of the Public Relations process.
- b) We continue, to this day, to resist public regulation of our activities as an outside mechanism to protect the public interest and have very ineffective, if any, implementation of our code of conduct

What I tried to do is to prove that a number of individuals, consultancies, companies, associations, universities from all continents had indeed accepted the challenge by interpreting and adapting that brief to the public relations infrastructures of their territories, and implemented the Accords.

I am pleased to report that it appears to have worked.

Examples:

- a) The Italian tourism industry was the focus of a 14-month programmed and concerted outreach effort by Ferpi (the Italian Public Relations Federation). A SurveyMonkey exercise conducted by the industry amongst its own leadership recently showed that not only 86.7% of the 276 respondents claimed that the *quality of relationships* is essential for the growth and competitiveness of the tourism industry, but 57% also believe that specific *professional competencies* are essential and 35% very important, in order to enhance the quality of those relationships. On a scale 0 to 5, the value of communication and relationship governance's professional competency scores 4.41 and, amongst the many professional roles attributed to the Public Relations profession, the highest ranking is 'to position tourism back into the country's political agenda' (4.37), followed by 'promoting the offer to the market' (4.33), by 'facilitating interactions with tourists before, during and after their experience' (4.32). The top function deals mostly with advocacy and public affairs, the second and third roles deal with our more consolidated practices. What is important to me is that integration of internal and external outreach and promotion of governance of relationships within the industry come well before increasing media output and publicity.
- b) The Moldovan government is actively working to adapt and adopt recommendation from a research effort by a NYU Masters in Public Relations and Corporate Communication thesis dedicated to the Stockholm Accords. Based on the idea that the out-flow of Moldovan migrants is likely to continue in the future, Public Relations play a crucial role in establishing and maintaining a process aimed at successfully managing these relationships. The process, centered on the idea that Moldovan migrants should be seen as an internal stakeholder, recognises that: (a) Moldovan migrants as a part of the network society; (b) Moldovan migrants have extensive value networks, both in Moldova and their host countries, and these networks can be used to gather and disseminate information; (c) Moldovan migrants are poised to be used as brand ambassadors that, when prompted, can act as advocates to internal and external publics.
- c) It is impossible to retrieve this at a global level, but we have evidence of at least 100 theses and research projects from graduate and undergraduate students, focused on the Accords, from the UK, South Africa, USA, Sweden and Italy alone.
- d) In South African universities the concept of stakeholder relationship management has restructured curricula, while the role of stakeholder relations officer has become significant in those 400 corporations listed in the Johannesburg Exchange, and now need either to comply or explain their integrated reporting procedures.

The Global Alliance decided to continue pursuing the effort of assembling some of the world's most important professionals and scholars to prepare a second 'relevant value creation analysis of Public Relations' with another initiative, the Melbourne Mandate, in preparation for the 2012 World Public Relations Forum scheduled in the Australian city.

In partnership with my friend Catherine Arrow from New Zealand, I agreed to facilitate and edit one of the three parts of the mandate, the one dedicated to defining a professional as the individual who is able always to distinguish between social, organisational, professional and personal responsibility (the other two concentrated on the character of an organisation and its willingness to listen).

PRConversations

In 2005 I had decided to enter into the social media scene with a blog, entitled “Toni’s Blog”, in English, dedicated to global Public Relations. My relationship with the digital world has always been, and still is, that of the amateur neophyte, interested in the social, political, professional, cultural consequences of the digital world but disinterested in the ‘whys’ and ‘hows’ of its technical aspects; (is ‘technical’ the correct term to use? Probably not, as I am well aware that knowledge of the latter facilitates the former’s full expression).

Similarly, I have known since childhood that pressing a button switches on the light, allowing me to see, but how the hell this happens is well beyond me.

Let’s just say that I am lazy; I am not the one who embraces the newest systems, but is always looking for an easier upgrade. To my credit, I will say that in the second part of the Seventies the Rank Xerox company, then involved in developing word processing networks in the workplace, convinced me, as CEO of my Public Relations consultancy SCR, to install an internal word processing interconnected system as a case study. Of course I can also list here our relationship with IBM and then with Apple in the mid-Eighties, my fascination and participation in the first ever Italian digital *list serve* developed by the Italian Radical Party in the late Eighties (that I also used to connect with my digitally-minded friends who participated in the 1989-1992 *Sinistra dei Club*’s life).

However, the decision to begin blogging was a strong commitment.

I proceeded for a few months with the satisfaction of being able to attract comments and guest posts from many of the most relevant professionals and academics of the time. In April 2007 I agreed to change the blog’s name from “Toni’s Blog” to “PRconversations” and to pass on the responsibility and burden of the blog to a trio of good friends and like-minded colleagues: Canadian Judy Gombita, British Heather Yaxley and Austrian Markus Pirchner.

Never would I have imagined for the blog quickly to become the most relevant and authoritative blog, connecting the most advanced and sophisticated professionals and scholars from the global Public Relations community: all the merit goes to my three colleagues whose hard work I have always supported with posts and comments. A truly great programme with which I am very fortunate and proud to have been involved.

Chapter 9: The Tens

The Muslim Question

The opening page of these memoirs deals with a curious episode I experienced in 2010. As recalled, it was the first attempt by some two hundred scholars and Muslim Public Relations professionals in Kuala Lumpur to gather and discuss how moderate Muslim communicators from around the world could envisage and support an organised effort to ‘change the public narrative’ on Islam.

On that occasion I met Imam Feisal, an American progressive and one of the leaders of the Muslim moderate movement worldwide; Feisal was also the main person involved in the ‘ground-zero mosque’ story in New York, which was mis-labelled and viciously attacked by American Islamophobes.

We immediately became friends and when, in later months, I was teaching Global Relations and Intercultural Communication course NYU, I reached out and invited him to talk with my students about his interpretation of the difference between multi and inter-culturalism.

We discovered many common traits and, coming from highly different cultural backgrounds, we have since spent many hours discussing various issues related to his groundbreaking ideas and projects. For the record, in my view, multiculturalism is a social model that sees different cultures with strong identities discuss and create progressive social environments that do not necessary imply cultural integration but peaceful coexistence, whereas inter-culturalism implies that different cultures also peacefully integrate and in full awareness may absorb features from weaker cultures.

The Cordoba Initiative

More recently, in July 2014, given my desire to pass more of my time in New York and move on to new experiences and challenges, I accepted with enthusiasm to act as a consultant for Imam Feisal’s not-for-profit Cordoba Initiative, in defining a global fundraising strategy and ‘horizontally’ supporting his projects.

Besides patiently (up to a point) waiting for a New York educational institution to assign me an adjunct professorship, following my recent resignation from NYU, I am concentrating on ensuring that the very act of fundraising become a ‘consubstantial’ characteristic of Cordoba’s mission, vision and guiding values in order to accelerate its strategic effort to stimulate and actively ‘shift the global public discourse’ on Islam.

I am still a *‘moderatbeist’*, but this does not preclude me from agreeing that the continued and increasing criminal activities of a minute minority of mentally-displaced and/or violent and militant groups (who have been and still are

being stirred by most western political elites' ongoing and ill-conceived policies) have rendered the Islamic issue an extremely serious obstacle to the progress and wellbeing of contemporary society in every country.

Clearly, I am not a military strategist but a Public Relations professional, so I choose to support and invest whatever skills and competencies I have accumulated in my 54 years of active professional life in a daring (maybe impossible, but nevertheless necessary) effort to attract the attention, the understanding and the participation of increasingly-alarmed and like-minded individuals in the implementation of projects that I have also contributed to develop.

Currently the three projects I am working on (from the above-described fundraising perspective) are:

- There are more than 7m Muslims living today in the United States and they bear various levels of diverse cultural traits, even though they practise what they believe to be the same religion. The objective is to accelerate, by adopting and adapting contemporary knowledge, social and digital sciences, the process of transition from Muslim American to American Muslim.

We are trying to achieve this objective through community participation by identifying, disseminating and co-developing a specific and consensual identity. This implies not only fostering and enhancing '*moderation*' (rather than moderation) as a progressive and critical approach to social life, but also stimulating inter-faith dialogue and understanding, creating 'spaces' and places where such dialogue can thrive and flourish. The entire ethos of my memoirs casts a light over this project as one which has direct involvement in developing the quality of relationships between organisations and their stakeholder publics;

- The possibility of achieving sustainable global governance very much relies on a common interpretation of basic human needs and expressions. The Sharia Index Project (SIP) is a seven-year long collaboration among reputed scholars from all major Muslim credos who achieve a basic consensus in interpreting how Islamic-majority countries and states may be compatible with contemporary society. This project defines and measures its objective by using the work of big data analysts, assembling and interpreting the principal variables of justice (as it applies to contemporary society), as well as the compliance of each Islamic state to these variables.

This is very powerful and high-impact work that, when disseminated globally with tact and professionalism, can well influence the global public discourse.

- We are increasingly aware that humans are more and more concentrating their day-to-day lives and activities in largely unattractive and unwelcoming urban centres. Solitude, poverty, despair, selfishness and 'air-conditioned' misery dictate poor quality of life for a large majority of urban dwellers. The creation of 'spaces' where these individuals can not only speak with one another, practise their respective religions, but also lead the cross-contamination of educational, artistic and cultural experiences, is more and more essential. This is the 'Cordoba House' project that demands active research of public, private, corporate and social organizations and institutions willing to help increase the number of these XXI century 'Agora'.

The Grunig Lecture

As I write these words something I never expected or even dared dream of happened to me that marks an appropriate and unexpected end to this story (at least for the time being).

I received an invitation from prof. Elizabeth Toth, from the University of Maryland, to be the first non-American scholar/professional to hold, on October 12 2014 in Washington DC, (on the opening day of the Public Relations Society of America International Conference), the 7th edition of the Grunig Lecture.

I am deeply touched by this invitation: to me, it is the biggest honour I have received since my long professional journey began 54 years ago.

Lauri and James Grunig, who will both attend the lecture and submit their commentary, have been my main mentors and since we met, many years ago, I have grown to respect and love them both.

The final text of the lecture is enclosed in the appendix session for your perusal.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

My life with Simona is as exciting, engaging and stimulating as ever. We often travel together to the United States or Europe, and we are both charmed by New York and Rome, in particular. We have a new house in north-east Gramercy and, when in Italy, we love to stay in Campo Dei Fiori, also spending some time in Porto Ercole.

Once more, as always, a very privileged life, of which I am well aware. I am fortunate to have a big, healthy and happy family, three siblings, five grandchildren, and many very important women who accompanied me during such great life, beginning of course with my mother, who actually inspired me and whose expression ('oh, glow worms...') became the title of this story.

I hope to have given some food for thought to my faithful reader.

Appendix

The full appendix is available online at:

<http://www.biasedmemoirs.com/appendix>

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