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DALLA PANCIA
CONTADINA
AL MONDO
GLOBALIZZATO

*From the Small Peasant Belly
to a Globalized World*

MONTEBELLUNA SPORTSYSTEM
DISTRETTO COSMOPOLITA
(Second part)

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MONTEBELLUNA SPORTSYSTEM
DISTRETTI ITALIANI

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FOREWORD

I have written this short collection of essays using the metaphor of the PEASANT BELLY because this seemed to me the best way of representing the Montebelluna district, which, initially, was characterised by a considerable closure and hostility to all that came from the outside WORLD.

The development of the Sportsystem is typified by a constant BELLY - WORLD dialogue, a constant battle between Conservatives and Innovators, between those who wanted to defend TRADITION at all costs and those who were open to new ideas from outsiders.

This idea forms the basis for my reflections: the district was successful, it surpassed all of its crises and is still dynamic because it wasn't a hostage to Tradition. It has had the courage to move on and accept the beneficial influences of the WORLD. Every time the District has come close to implosion, it has come back precisely because it has been able to digest the ideas of those, from outside, which seemed to be its biggest threat.

If history is our teacher, then one lesson we can learn is this: at a time when the identity of the Sportsystem seemed to be disfigured, even wiped out by the sudden emergence of external values, looking to the past can be a source of comfort and encouragement. Are

Tradition and Innovation really so incompatible?
Every Tradition started life as an Innovation. It's just
that we've forgotten about it.

Aldo Durante

I

THE VENETO IS A COLLECTION OF SMALL PEASANT BELLIES

For centuries the Venetians lived inside the belly of a Great Mother Belly. Naturally, the belly was not the same for everyone. The nobles, the middle class and the intellectuals moved and travelled around from Venice, Padua, Verona, Treviso and Vicenza to their country estates spread out on the mainland; they enjoyed a wide and varied vision of the surrounding territory.

The belly in which these well-to-do people lived was lauded by Ruzante, who, in order to describe the beauty and richness of the Venetian countryside in his speech at the Barco della Regina Caterina Cornaro three miles from Asolo, after having listed the fruits, animals and birds, dwelt on the ladies: "*They are truly beautiful, each and every one of our ladies!*", exclaimed Ruzante, praising their big, ugly feet, their fat legs, their hard thighs just waiting to be pinched, and "*their round bellies, bellies able to carry three babies in one go*".

The belly in which the other people lived, the peasants and craftsmen, didn't have the dimensions of a region

or even a province. Neither Pavano nor Marca were joyous and affectionate. And although they were all Christians, protected by the holy water of the same Church, the peasants and the craftsman didn't feel like sons and daughters of a Universal Belly big and vast like the Church. In order to feel a sense of community, they needed a Small Belly. For this reason it is right to say that the Veneto peasant was not a Great Belly but a collection of many Small Bellies.

We perceive the space that surrounds us in two ways: the first allows us to construct successive, concentric rings that gradually disappear into the extreme limits of the vast unknown; the other is dynamic in character, and consists in travelling through space while slowly losing awareness of its linear nature.

The space in the Small Peasant Belly had the dimensions of a Parish and represented a "*radial space*" in which one could travel from one end to the other on foot or by oxen and wagon in a single day. It was the time needed to go from home to church, to the tavern, to the market, to the cemetery and back home again.

II

VALUES

So, let's take an ultrasound of this Small Belly and try to see what the values were that made up the placenta from which the children of the peasants and craftsman were nurtured. In the beginning there was Nature. The Nature of the Small Peasant Belly wasn't an uncontaminated landscape with healthy air and men who grew strong and vigorous. Pain and Death were introduced into Nature, corrupted by Original Sin. The Small Belly experienced this reality in a dramatic way. The Nature of our forefathers was mean. It didn't yield fruits with magnanimous spontaneity as in the earthly Paradise. The Small Peasant Belly often felt pangs of hunger because the famines happened with terrible regularity throughout of the nineteenth century. Just as in the time of Ruzante; in his Mènego, "*witty and extremely ridiculous dialogue*" (1528), famine is present from beginning to end; "*it seems,*" says Lovarini, "*nothing else is spoken about: one speaks about it just to grumble, to console oneself or just to laugh*". For the Montebellunesi of the nineteenth century things weren't much different. Pellagra affected twenty per cent of the population and the infant mortality rate during the winter months reached

fifty percent. These figures are even higher than those for some of the under-developed countries of the twentieth century.

Nature was magical. Concerning the Small Venetian Peasant Belly it is worth considering the observations of Robert Muchembled on the agricultural society of the *Ancien Regime*. Muchembled maintains that under the gloss of Christianity there appeared to be a mingling of beliefs, taboos and rituals that were becoming mixed with the popular devotions and which the Protestant and Catholic reformers called superstitious and diabolical. These taboos and rituals demonstrated that Christianity was being swallowed by popular, rural culture and integrated into an animated and viable vision of the world. In fact, daily life was influenced by numerous superstitions and beliefs regarding marital, burial and baptismal customs, not to mention spells and witchcraft.

The second value was formed by religion which permeated the lives of Christians from the cradle to the grave. I wrote "Hapsburg Catholic Integralism" on this theme, to which I kindly refer the reader.

The third value was contained in a Book that, being different from the Bible, had no authors: Tradition, also called Common Law. Tradition consisted of the customs that each generation handed down orally to the next; customs that established what the peasants and craftsmen could and could not do. It was above all

a code of honour. The historian Tucidide, referring to the Athenians of the fifth century BC, speaks of *"institutions... although not written down, were recognized by everyone and brought shame on those who violated them"*.

So, if the Church punished with penance, and Power punished with prison, Tradition punished with disapproval and embarrassment. Nature, Religion and Tradition all contributed to create and sustain in the minds of those who came to the Small Peasant Belly the conviction found in Ecclesiastes: *"There is nothing new under the sun"*.

In the small community, the sharing of values was such that dissension was impossible. Those who didn't agree to abide by the rules were perceived as traitors. Andrei, a character from Chekhov's comedy *The Three Sisters*, comments on his fellow citizens in the fourth act: *"They don't do anything but eat, drink, sleep, then they die... others are born who simply eat, drink, sleep and become stupid from boredom, vary their lives with silly gossip, vodka, cards and intrigues"*.

Andrei the Russian, lived in a city of one hundred thousand inhabitants and belonged to the bourgeoisie. He was an educated man, read the newspapers and was generally capable of possessing a less narrow-minded vision than that of a peasant or a craftsman from Montebelluna. Nevertheless, he complained that among the one hundred thousand inhabitants, *"there*

isn't even one who isn't the same".

The ideology of the Small Peasant Belly didn't encourage originality. Being different and distancing oneself from the shared customs was viewed with suspicion. There was a subtle reason that contributed to making each and every original idea suspect, the fear of heresy. A good Catholic followed the Doctrine of the Church and didn't interpret it as he or she saw fit. This cultural attitude penetrated the consciences of the people and applied to every aspect of social life. The uniformity of clothes that was imposed on the children raised in the Houses was the model of uniformity of spirit. Being respectful of the rules was the clay that formed the good citizen.

In the Small Peasant Belly, the entire community was nurtured by the same placenta and everyone who lived under the protection of the Church's holy water had to adapt and conform. Perhaps for this reason some malevolent people maintained that the Venetian Christians, raised in the Small Peasant Belly, were conformists.

III

THE CATHOLIC WORK ETHIC

Up until recently - today it's less frequent - the answer

given by Venetians when being addressed by someone was almost a Pavlovian reaction: "*Comandi!*" (Command me!). It's the same for the universal greeting that the Venetian language gave the world, "*Ciao*", which means slave, your servant. What is the origin of this Venetian peculiarity? What deep, unconscious feelings caused the release in the Veneto of this willingness to obey? It might be useful to make a brief exploration into the world of the Veneto as imagined by those who Small Peasant Belly.

The omnipresent image that testified to just how much religion permeated every aspect of life and landscape was that of the cross. The cross remains even today the most diffuse symbol of the Venetian culture, though one doesn't know how much is based on tradition and how much is based on conviction. In the nineteenth century the cross was the belly button of the Small Peasant Belly. The cross shone on top of the bell-tower, it was found at street intersections, it had a place of honour in the kitchen and above the bed, in the stalls it protected the animals, in the fields the toil of the peasants, in the workshops the artisans. The cross accompanied every moment in life. The sign of the cross made with holy water signified the entrance into life through Baptism; a cross on the forehead with oil, the Extreme Unction representing the final farewell to this life. The image of the cross followed like a shadow step by step and day by day those who lived in the

Small Peasant Belly. And what was the most profound teaching of the Christian symbol par excellence? Saint Paul summarized it in his letter to the Philippians, where he remembers that Jesus: *"until death and in death made himself humble and obedient to the cross. For this God exalted him and gave him the name that is above all other names"*. Monsignor Dalmistro portrayed the behaviour of the first Christians to the Montebellunesi in this manner: *"You would have seen them cheerfully and willingly interested in the construction of public buildings, in the excavation of mines, in the wearing of a sign of the civil authority, the military jacket, and with the commanders, marching against domineering and tyrannically oppressive enemies"*.

The works of the Provost of Montebelluna pronounced in 1808 (the speech was published in the volume Letters of Authority) were an updated version of those of Saint Paul. At every sign of the cross the Christian reminded himself more or less consciously that he had to obey. In fact the Saints, considered champions, heroes of the Christian life, had excelled in demonstrating virtue. Obedience was evident in the innumerable ranks of martyrs who were sacrificed in the cause of spreading the Word of God, and whose sacrifices were exalted by outstanding artists in the frescos and paintings in the churches with stupendous colours and shapes.

Which were the best-known miracles of the dearest Saints in the popular mind? Among the prodigies of Saint Rita, was the very famous germination of the dry grape vine, watered and looked after obediently each day and the flowering of roses out of season. From Saint Anthony, *The Saint (Il Santo)* by Antonomasia, the most celebrated virtues were virtue and obedience, "*Obedience*", writes Saint Anthony, "*raises man above himself and renders luminous the Path of Righteousness, even if among its gifts, obedience must include that of being blind.*"

In order to reach Paradise there was therefore a main road, tried and tested by thousands and thousands of Saints: that of obedience. Among the champions of obedience there were also Purgative Souls, who invoked prayers and Masses for the souls of relatives in Purgatory. Every morning many Christians in the Small Peasant Belly began the day attending a Mass for the deceased. And what was their teaching? Patience and resignation. Resignation was the unique condition of the conscience that, if totally embraced, gave a sense of the human destiny. In the Small Peasant Belly everyone professed this philosophy.

How did family, relatives and neighbours interpret misfortune, a sickness, an accident at work, a hail storm, the loss of a calf or abandonment by a fiancé? As a punishment from God. A just punishment. Because in the beginning there was always sin: a

disobedience shown to God and to his Law. Religious Muslims explained the Tsunami which devastated Asia in 2004 as a sign of divine disapproval of the corruption brought from the West.

The Christian religion not only instilled in the faithful the duty of obedience but also supplied the theological justification. Starting with the sin of Adam, humanity was degraded. Mankind had become a Mass of damnation that only the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross could redeem. For this reason, Christians always had to obey. In every moment of their lives. How to conduct oneself with the Civil Authorities was taught for centuries using the words of Saint Paul: *"Everyone is subject to the Authorities that are in power and there is no power that doesn't come from God. Therefore, he who sides against the Authorities, puts himself against the order established by God; the rebels incur the wrath of God"*.

Guiding conduct within the family was the Fourth Commandment, which ordered the honouring of Mother and Father. Concerning work it was again Saint Paul who outlined the straight path: *"Servants, obey your masters"*. But it was God himself who had defined the Catholic work ethic. The moment he cast out Adam from the Terrestrial Paradise he was explicit: *"You will work with sweat on your brow"*. Here is the indelible mark of the Catholic ethic, the sacred and infallible words of the Bible stamped with fire on the

flesh of the labourers. An ethic that forged throughout the centuries ranks of gentle peasants, of emigrants available to every humiliation, of obedient troops in a massacre of trench warfare, of Masses of hard-working labourers, devout and underpaid.

If the job were a punishment wouldn't it make some sense to complain because the conditions were so difficult? If the job were a sacrifice, was it legitimate to ask respect for normal work hours? The Master, in as much as he represented God, was an instrument to atone for original sin. For the Venetian worker raised in the Catholic Ethic, his salary was a gift, not a right. And his Master a Benevolent Master.

One could object that the Church, among its precepts, included "*a just mercy for the labourer*". But who was waiting for a definition of a just mercy? In the miserable peasant society work was scarce. For this reason a job was considered a gift from God. The tenant, other than signing the rent contract with a cross contained in it, also made gifts to his Landlord, because such was the Custom.

Some might ask: did the Catholic Work Ethic only affect the lower classes of peasants and artisans? In order to answer this question I will use the words of Emperor Franz Josef, who explained very clearly why employees, functionaries and servants of the State had to work: "*You serve not to be paid but because it's your duty*". This thought, which reeks of Kant was

formulated after the events of 1848. On the occasion of the Revolution, the Government disputed bitterly that it weakened the principles underlying duty and the restraints on it. Many workers felt freed from every obligation towards the Sovereign, except for preservation of the salary. The very Catholic Hapsburg Emperor believed that it was opportune to clarify that men of honour had always to be ready to fulfil, *"even to the point of dire poverty, one's duty and one's oath"*. Work schedules were fine but if service requires it, "there is no time limit". The orchestra had changed but the music was the same.

The Super Me turned to the Middle Class with accents borrowed from Kant, while with the common people the works of the Holy Bible and the precepts of the Church were used in a more direct way. The Church, with its anointed oil, protected and tempered the harshness of misfortune, famine and exploitation with Charity.

With Industrialization, the conditions of the Small Peasant Belly didn't change. Work continued to become scarce. And those who didn't have the courage (or the desperation) to emigrate, had to surrender. If the Holy Father, in giving work gave grace to the workers, was it Christian to strike? In these terms, the Catholic Ethic, which constituted the placenta in the uterus of the Small Peasant Belly, would seem to be above all an instrument of exploitation. The truth is

that the first to practice this work ethic were the artisans. The first to be sentenced to work like someone condemned was the Master. In some measure the influence of the Ethic of Sacrifice has lasted to the present. At least among the older generations.

The mechanization of agriculture in the Boom years delivered a gift of extraordinary amounts of work to the Masters. There was no written contract. It was a habit, a part of the Catholic Ethic. The Master (Landowner/Company) rewarded the workers with something above and beyond the pay packet. The crazy desire to work on the part of many Venetian entrepreneurs and artisans at the beginning of the twentieth century has its origins in a gigantic sense of guilt, in the omnipresent, extremely powerful, obsessive Super Me Catholic.

IV

THE WORLD

Outside the Small Peasant Belly was the World where the Foreigners lived. The Foreigners, par excellence, were the soldiers who requisitioned animals, hay, wine and foodstuffs when war broke out. (On this subject one can read the Documents on the wars from 1815 to

1918, published by Montebelluna Sportsystem and the Italian Districts.)

The Foreigners were the shepherds who along with their flocks came to winter on the plains and thereby ruined the harvests. The Foreigners were wanderers who lived by stealing and in general were shady and dishonest people. But the Foreigners were also Christians who lived in the shadow of other bell towers. They prayed to the same saints; they cultivated the same grain and the same maize; they raised the same livestock. But who knew them? Who supported and stood behind them? They lived therefore in their own Small Bellies. Each Small Belly had its own impassable boundaries and those who violated them came to regret it.

The World was above all synonymous with the City and the City was very different from the Small Peasant Belly. The City was full of ideas against Religion. Wasn't the Revolution an invention of the Foreigners? Weren't the Carboni and the Liberals all Foreigners? Please! The fact that a girl, having gone to work in the City and having returned home pregnant, and condemned to never finding a ghost of a man to marry her, wasn't that perhaps proof (the parish priest preached it from the pulpit in sullen, morose tones) that she had given herself up to the flatteries of the World?

V

THE BEAUTIFUL THINGS OF THE WORLD THE VENETO OF COUNTRY HOMES

The World of the Cities had brought some good things to the Small Peasant Bellies. It is necessary to mention it because they concerned Beauty. The Counts Marquis with high-sounding names like Correr, Pisani and Grimani had constructed, in the middle of the fields, at the foot of the hills, between a river and a patch of woods, their country homes, embellished with frescos, surrounded by gardens adorned with statues and fountains. the few peasants who had been to Venice spoke of how the City of the Signori (Nobles) was made up of palaces and churches identical to the churches and country homes of the Small Peasant Belly. When it came to Architecture, Painting and Beauty, the illiterate Venetian peasants and craftsmen were certainly avant-garde. In fact, in the matter of Aesthetics, they could compete with anyone. Their teachers included such illustrious names as Palladio, Veronese and Tiepolo. Since the peasants and craftsmen attended the same churches and the Nobles and worked in their magnificent country homes, the masterpieces of these outstanding artists were their daily bread. So much so that even some poor, humble houses had gothic arches. Little shrines dotted about the fields were small, tasteful jewels of popular art.

Even certain stable roofs were more beautiful and harmonious than the presumptuous houses of the Boom years.

VI

THE CULT OF BEAUTY AND LANDSCAPE AS A SCHOOL

At one time, if a son shirked the responsibility of his duties, his father scolded him saying: "Study! study!" By "study" he didn't mean the intellectual act of reading, writing or doing homework; he meant the practice of doing one's best. Studying was a practical act, an action. What we call industrial zones (districts) are nothing more than the chapters of the Great Poem of the Venetian work ethic. "Study! study!" meant "do! do!" For centuries this *doing* (constructing and building), was respectful of the Countryside, or, rather, continuously becoming a part of the Countryside.

No Venetian, neither aristocrat nor peasant, dreamt of disfiguring the Countryside in order to build a house or a villa, a hayloft or a vegetable garden. And so it was that, from about 1500 to 1800 the Venetians invented, built and modelled their Countryside in such a way that Nature and Man found a rare harmony. The amazing thing was that all of this didn't take place in an idyllic atmosphere. The relationship between the property

owners and the peasants was often strained and during some periods extremely difficult. Justice suffered. It came to be thought that the humiliated and offended of the Small Peasant Belly, in order to react and protest, would have to dissociate themselves from Beauty. By right - as the Modernisers suggest - the famished poor could demand: first feed us and then we'll think about beautiful things.

Instead, our miserable, illiterate, pellagra-ridden ancestors had such a regard, such a passion for Beauty, that they considered it even more important than Justice. One could say that it was a superstructure of the ruling class. Certainly, it is impressive to observe with what good taste our forefathers made even the most humble objects used in everyday life. And what a lesson for the Modernisers, who in the name of wretched and immediate concerns, disfigured the Countryside in such an insensible and vulgar manner. Perhaps the respect for Nature that our forefathers had was born out of the fact that they considered it an epiphany, an expression of the Divine.

VII

THE MARKET

On Wednesdays, every Wednesday for centuries, at the Market, the World entered the Small Belly of

Montebelluna. They were the Foreigners who came from (the) other Small Bellies of Pedemontana, of the Feltre mountains, or from the City of Treviso. But they were known as Foreigners. They were almost always the same, above all animal and seed traders. It was a controlled World. The Authorities kept strict vigilance over them.

Certainly, the Small Belly fed off the news from the Foreigners. But just as the food that arrived from the placenta was chewed by the mother first, so too were the new ideas metabolized by Tradition. And with the passage of time they became a part of Tradition. Potatoes, brought in by Christopher Columbus, were still not being eaten by the Montebellunesi three centuries later. They still felt safer giving them to the sheep of the Count Onigo di Pederrobba. What did Tradition teach? Fruits, not roots, were to be eaten from a plant.

So, every Wednesday the Small Belly of Montebelluna welcomed to its market with sympathy and interest the foreigners who came down from the mountains: they were trustworthy and respectful of the Tradition. For them, the shoemakers of Montebelluna had a certain amount of respect and for centuries they made clogs, *gallozze* and *dalmare* by hand.

VIII

THE ARRIVAL OF THE FOREIGNERS

On the fifteenth of July, 1866, the first platoons of soldiers passed down Via Calcinada (today Corso Mazzini). The Municipal Council of Montebelluna and the Town Deputies of the district sent a letter of homage and tribute to His Majesty Vittorio Emanuele II, King of Italy, and the plebiscite of October 21-22, with 8,303 votes in favour and no votes against or abstaining, ratifying the union of Italy.

In truth the Peasant Belly, opposed to the bourgeoisie, perceived the Italians as Foreigners and they underwent a severe trial during the reorganization of the role of the Church from whom they wrestled control of the new educational system.

Three years later, in 1869, from its deepest bowels, the Small Peasant Belly boiled over. The town Administration opened the doors of the schools to children, a novelty the Austrian Authorities had for decades tried to impose on them but which the Small Peasant Belly had always rejected.

The most explosive news of the century was the relocation of the market. And who brought this about? A Foreigner. Count Domenico Zuccareda had his country house in Montebelluna, it's true, but being a patriot and protector of the Carbonari and enemy of the

Austrians who were allies of the Church, he took refuge in Milan. He became a friend both to Vittorio Emanuele II and the liberal Count Cavour.

The Count returned to Montebelluna and became its Mayor. In 1872 he had the wooden huts that rose out of the narrow and inconvenient little squares on the hill dismantled, and moved the market to the plain below. The resistance from the Parish Priest (landlord of the area from which the plain was obtained) and the stall and shop owners was to no avail.

The new Montebelluna was born with a decision that broke with Tradition in a clamorous way. With a little bit of pomp we can state that by 1872 the Middle Ages had finally come to an end because a chapter of privilege which the Parish had enjoyed since the time of Federick Barbarossa (Federick the Great or Red Beard) had finally been closed. The Small Craftsman Belly on this occasion felt that this new development would serve them well. And the shoemakers, Catholic yes, obedient to the Church, yes, but not insensitive to business, were among those who benefited from evident advantages: in 1872 there were fifty-five shops in Montebelluna while at the beginning of the twentieth century there were two hundred.

IX

THE REFORM OF THE MONTELLO

Another big setback occurred in 1892. After twenty years of discussion Parliament transformed the Montello, already a flourishing, fertile forest at the time of the Serenissima, into agricultural land and divided it into plots which were given to the *Bisnenti*. (literally “twice nothings” this was name given to woodsmen who lived off what they could steal from the villages near the forest). The protagonist of the reform was a lawyer with liberal ideas - meaning foreign - born in Montebelluna, Pietro Bertolini. The news of the Montello presented a paradox. Bertolini drew the reasons for justifying the reform right from deep within the Belly of Tradition. The forest - he argued, and thousands of US peasants were in agreement with him, had belonged to the woodsmen since time immemorial. The rights of the *Bisnenti* had their roots in Germanic law! The reform of the Montello was something new that came more from the Belly of the woodsmen than from the minds of politicians. And in fact some liberals would have liked to entrust the deforested lands to a Great Private Company able to guarantee investments for the construction of colonial houses, stables, dairies, schools, etc. This would have been a new fact:

peasants working the land together; peasants that remained US with citizens' rights, and not with obligations of a feudal character.

But the proposal of the Great Private Company was ingested in the belly of the US *Bisnenti* who aspired to become many small MEs. The Foreigners, to whom the land was given, pretended that the Tradition was respected: every ME had therefore a quota, that is to say its four fields of rocks and clay. After the reform of the Montello the promises were not maintained and it was revealed to be a colossal failure. The *ex-Bisnenti* grew too fast to be satisfied and there was not enough work for everyone. Many MEs, disillusioned and hungry, took the road to America or followed the mists to Northern Europe.

Even the Comunities behaved like many MEs. Four towns did not succeed in forming a consortium to manage the services of the Montello. Not even the cemetery: the Small Bellies of the Montello, extremely protective of their territory, didn't even want to share it with their dead.

X

THE TOURISTS

In the meantime news of the World was reaching the Small Belly. In 1877, with the birth of the Popular Bank of Montebelluna, an institution that became the engine of Montebelluna's economy, easy access to credit stimulated the initiatives of the artisans.

Then the railroad (1882-1884), connecting Montebelluna with Treviso, Belluno, Padova and Venezia, made travel available to many who up until then had lived closed up in the Small Belly.

At the end of the nineteenth century the World generated a new species of Foreigners: the tourists. After many *gallozze*, after many clogs and after many work shoes for peasants and woodsmen, Montebelluna began to make shoes by the thousands for people who took trips and excursions to the Alps and the Dolomites. The great excursion to the Farcella di Lavarado was spectacular, organized by the Touring Club on September 21, 1913, it saw the participation of thousands of mountaineers, immortalized on the cover of *Domenica del Corriere*.

Here was the origin of shoemaking for sports which marked the destiny of the district. The rock-climbing shoe for mountaineers was a novelty requested by the World, but had its roots in a secular past: work shoes

for woodsmen. It was the beginning of a new Tradition.

XI

THE FACTORY

At the beginning of the twentieth century some of the more enterprising shoemakers enlarged their shops and transformed them into a new reality: the factory. This heralded the entrance of industrial culture into the Small Artisan Belly.

Cars came as a formidable blow to Tradition. Like many other innovations they came from the Foreigners. If Luigi Voltan brought cars from America giving rise to the Strà district, Giuseppe Mattiello made them at home in imitation of those he had seen in Germany.

In the beginning, the number of cars was rather modest. In the shoe factories the main figures were the same: cutters, stitchers, those who continued to use their hands to carry out their work. But for many shoemakers the era of the work bench outside the front door of the house, under the portico or in the stall was effectively over. Dozens and dozens of people found themselves locked in huge rooms with a foreman who gave them orders and kept them under surveillance.

The men carried out the more tiring and dangerous jobs: cutting, assembly line work and shipping. The

women were assigned the jobs of inventory, sewing and hemming. The hemmer became an emblematic figure in the shoe factory. The shoe factories drew their hemmers from the textile and tailoring sectors, which already had a long tradition in the territory.

XII

THE FIRST WORLD WAR (1914-1918)

With the war the World invaded the Small Belly in a violent and barbaric way. The war was a dreadful and powerful scream of modernity. At the foot of the Montello arrived the best of technology: not only machine guns, but Spad VII planes from the ninety-first squadron (from the Assi to which Francesco Baracca belonged); but also ambulances, airships, trucks... and on the very streets of Montebelluna marched the Scots, men who wore skirts!

It's true that the army also brought a little work as well because the mountaineers needed climbing shoes. Not great quantities (the small shops couldn't satisfy enormous orders), but enough to feed one or two small factories which were, by necessity, run by women.

But the Small Belly was frightened. The ME peasants and the ME artisans were looking for protection in the Church. The Pope was against the war, imposed by

anticlericals. The results were not expected: the heavy defeat of Caporetto. Columns of soldiers in flight entrenched on the right bank of the Piave, on the Grappa and on the Montello. And what did the High Command do? It enlisted the services of some “working girls” to improve the morale of the troops! The WORLD, thundered the priests from the pulpit, is leading us to the whorehouses. The chaplain of Montebelluna Antonio del Colle recorded it indignantly in his diary: "Today two cows arrived, commonly known as women, to open a porcelleria....a cowshed." For the Small Peasant Belly it was a mortal offence.

The Austro-Hungarian offensive began on the fifteenth of June, 1918. The army of the Emperor attacked with sixty-six divisions and during the Battle of Solstizio, which lasted until the twenty-third of June, the rock depressions of the Montello filled up with thirty thousand corpses. A spectacle of modern warfare that the Small Belly experienced for the first time.

XIII

THE REDS IN POWER

At the end of the war something incredible happened: the Reds (as the republicans of Guido Bergamo, founder of the Italian Republican Party and formidable

organizer of strikes, came to be called) won the elections. For Catholic Montebelluna it was an absolute first. What was the secret of such an unusual victory? The Bergamini interpreted the aspirations of the Small Peasant Belly: they preached the autonomy of the town councils from Rome, they wanted their taxes to remain in the Veneto! It was 1921.

Seventy years before the existence of Lega Nord (a political party which preaches federalism) Mayor Giuseppe dall'Armi pronounced the following words in the local Council: "The ideal would be that the Council was able to administer itself freely... but the Local and Regional laws obstruct every freedom of action and at times also even the most daring and justified deliberations are forced to break down when confronted by the tyrannical restrictions of a law that we will not cease to fight, together, if only, I hope, with the thousands of towns already won by the proletariat and by true democracy. For these reasons we will have to, in the meantime, act in such a way as to give the maximum extension to the spirit of the Law, evading it whenever and wherever possible." In the years 1922-1924 Fascism arrived and history changed course.

XIV

THE SKI BOOT, THE VIBRAM SOLE AND OTHER SPORTS

In 1896 Adolf Kind, a Swiss engineer residing in Turin, introduced the sport of skiing to Italy and in 1903 the pearl of the Belluno Dolomites, the Cortina d'Ampezzo Ski Club was born. The shoemakers from Montebelluna, trained by the war and emigration, had become more receptive towards the innovations of the WORLD. The ski boot was a case in point. Tradition was not forsaken. Tradition adapted itself to the new realities. In the beginning the ski boot was only a variation of the mountain boot, then it became a single-purpose product, no longer suited to walking.

In 1937 Vitale Bramani, a Milanese industrialist and mountain climber, and therefore a foreigner, introduced his revolutionary discovery: the Vibram sole, made from a single piece of vulcanised rubber, stitched or glued to the upper (previously the soles were made by stitching various layers of leather together). For the mountain shoe and the ski boot it was a fundamental step. Today the best shoes use Vibram soles which are synonymous with the highest quality and performance. The WORLD was in continuous agitation and the shoemakers from Montebelluna were on the ball. Sports included more than just mountain climbing and skiing. The new rich

were enjoying themselves in many different ways. And this is why the catalogues Nordica, Dolomite and Munari in the Thirties offered a wider range than that of Tradition. Even if in small quantities, the Montebelluna shoe factories were producing golf and hiking shoes, ice skates and soccer boots. The district's magic word, "diversification", was in use even before the Second World War.

XV

PEASANT PLACENTA

During the twenty-year period of Fascism, the motto **GOD, COUNTRY AND FAMILY** appeared on the walls of the houses. The district was industrializing, but the peasant placenta received fresh nourishment from Fascist ideology. When in 1938 the "paron" of La Alpina, Giuseppe Mattiello, found himself in trouble, he brought together his employees and explained the situation to them: "There isn't work for all of you, but I will lay people off following the principles of a good father, looking to guarantee a job to at least one member of each family. Faced with such a paternalistic attitude, and blessed by the parish priest, how could class warfare take roots?"

The Church wasn't yet enthusiastic about the Industrial Revolution. Its eyes were turned towards the past. Its

point of reference was the small shops, which because of their familiar characteristics, were closer to Tradition. The priest of Montebelluna, Monsignor Furlan, in asking the Questore in Treviso to close all of the places "where our young go to waste their best energy" (i.e. ballrooms), doesn't seem far from the Muslim Mullahs of today who see in western promiscuity and individual liberty a mortal poison for the Muslim religion. *"Now they've opened another ballroom. What a great way to educate our youth on the sense of frugality wanted by the Duce!"*

XVI

MONTEBELLUNA ON TOP OF THE WORLD

1954 was an exciting year. Montebelluna climbed to the second highest summit in the World, K2. The mountaineers of the expedition, led by Ardito Desio, wore Dolomite shoes.

The name of Montebelluna rang out in all the newspapers. It was an absolute first. The shoemakers of the Montello had become famous. The WORLD was talking about them. The SMALL INDUSTRIAL BELLY had a moment of pride. The WORLD was not only temptations and dangers. Even the most conservative discovered a good side to the WORLD.

K2 signalled a great launch for the Dolomite trademark and thanks to this event the whole district became recognized internationally even if it was already starting to specialize in ski boots.

1954 also saw the arrival of the television. Television allowed the faithful to see the Pope without going to Rome but it also had a terrible affect on TRADITION, killing off the *filò*. The *filò* was when farmers and artisans went into the stables and cowsheds in the early evenings to keep warm and sing the rosary. Now the *filò* was held at the bar, playing cards.

XVII

THE DANGERS OF THE WORLD

After the Second World War America became the model to which more and more Christians of the Small Peasant Belly (which was rapidly industrializing) were becoming attracted.

The Church was worried. America was predominately Protestant. The more frightened priests identified it as the GREAT DANGER. It wasn't the GREAT SATAN but almost. Concerning the Protestants, the most faithful of the Catholic hierarchy to Tradition did not even allow the Schola Cantorum (composed only of

males) to perform Bach's psalms during the celebration of the Eucharist. Only at the end of the Mass was the virtuoso organist allowed the display of a fugue. Bach was a Protestant and his music performed during the liturgy would have seemed a betrayal, or at least a concession to the doctrine of Luther.

Songs (*songs? wild screams*), dances (*dances? frenetic movements*) and above all films from Hollywood were constantly arriving.

Above all. the WORLD that America was exporting was coming from the sinful studios of Hollywood.

The Church, the secular anointed oil of the Small Peasant Belly, felt the need to defend its children from the WORLD. Every week a Directory of recommended, not recommended and prohibited films was released. The Church was equally attentive to infection from publications; Books and magazines in ever increasing numbers spread false doctrines; photo romances that were corrupting not only young girls but even married women; Bold Comics that encouraged young readers to do things that were not educational.

In every church *Famiglia Cristiana*, *La Vita del Popolo* and *il Vittorioso* were handed out to all the parishioners. But many Catholics, even the most fervent, were delighting themselves with *Bolero* and *Grand Hotel*. The Conservatives, who feared for the fate of the people in the Small Peasant Belly, proclaimed daily that the deadly influences of the

WORLD were destroying the ancient defences and opening up more and more breaches in them.

Like the territorial boundaries that were becoming outmoded by the new means of transport such as the train and the car, and the boundary between night and day that was disappearing under public illumination, so too the rigid boundaries between men and women were coming under attack.

The most painful sign of the shrinking of the Small Peasant Belly was the loss of the sanctity of the Home and therefore of the Family. Children were no longer being born in the bedrooms of their parents but in hospital wards; the dead were no longer initiating the final journey from the kitchen of their homes but from the mortuary.

XVIII

CENSORSHIP, TO ROME VIA THE TELEVISION TO MONTEBELLUNA VIA THE PULPIT

In 1958 twelve per cent of Italians owned a television. During these years even in the small towns of the district, after the cafes and the bars, the “box of dreams” ascended to its little throne in the living rooms

and kitchens of the homesteads. Providence wanted the television to be seriously controlled by the Cristian Democrats (CD), which in turn was heavily inspired by the Vatican. In fact there was a scrupulous censorship that sifted through the programs so that no "attitudes, poses or details that roused basic instincts" were represented.

On the same wavelength were the ecclesiastical Authorities. They suggested, directly or by way of the assistants of Catholic Action (CA), how long skirts and shirt sleeves should be. Even in the more devoted families heated discussions flared up between the shouts of the fathers and the implorings of tolerance from the mothers: was a young girl who was a member of Catholic Action permitted to wear lipstick? Could a young engaged girl hold her Catholic fiancé while dancing before their love was consecrated in front of the priest? Was it scandalous to approach the Eucharistic altar without a veil or wearing pantyhose? Was a kiss on the mouth, also known as a French kiss, to be considered a serious sin against purity, or only a venial sin, to be forgiven with leniency or a short prayer?

The other bulwark of Tradition was the School. The principals' lives were becoming increasingly difficult. From Protestant America arrived the latest explosive novelty: the ball-point pen. The School tried to oppose it saying that the ball-point pen would cancel one of the

most aristocratic, most refined and brightest monuments of European Tradition: handwriting. Then, with the arrival of 1968, we all know how things went.

XIX

AMERICAN CULTURE TRIUMPHS

The Second Vatican Council gave the upper hand to reformist theories, creating an opening to the WORLD. This further favoured the desecrated American spirit that permeated every aspect of life. The WORLD (America), with its new things and its innovations, celebrated its triumphs on all fronts.

Regarding morals in the Small Belly, things were being seen that a few years previously would have seemed like science fiction. A women's mantilla became smaller and smaller; the bolder women even left it at home. Young girls were permitted to leave the house in the evening to play volleyball, dressed in a track suit! The wearing of pants caused a furious ethical debate.

In 1962 the Socialists, allying themselves with the DC, formed the first Centre-Left government. In the district, which had a majority of Christian Democrats, things did not change in a noticeable way. For the

conservative intellectuals, the Socialists were the barbarian infidels, followers of Marx, and the ones who wrestled from the Christian Democrats - by trickery, it was said - the elimination of Latin.

But shortly after the Second Vatican Council, Latin was abolished even from the Mass. What a disillusionment for the cultured men of Tradition! Unfortunately the thirst for modernisation had also infected the clergy.

XX

THE ITALIAN ECONOMIC MIRACLE

Between 1958 and 1963 the growth rate of the Gross National Product reached the record level of 6.3 per cent annually: it was the Italian economic miracle.

This extraordinary development was fed by Change from foreign markets which gave rise to the phenomenon known as "dualism of the productive structure". The foreign demand from the rich and industrialized countries created pressure for new products requiring high rates of capital and technology. Sectors like chemicals, mechanics and metallurgy, which exported, showed themselves to be more and more dynamic while the sectors turned more towards the internal market remained more static.

Some examples: in 1947 Candy was producing one washing machine every day, in 1967 one every fifteen seconds. In 1951 18,500 refrigerators were produced in Italy, in 1957 the figure was 370,000 and in 1967 more than 3,200,000. Italy had become the number one European producer of home appliances.

During this time plastics began to enter daily life. In 1963 Kartell produced the first plastic highchair for babies based on the design of Richard Sapper and Marco Zanuso. During the same period shoe soles and uppers began to be made from plastics.

XXI

THE PLASTICS REVOLUTION, HENRY FORD ARRIVES IN MONTEBELLUNA

In 1967, during a tradeshow, the Montebellunesi discovered that Bob Lange, a technician from Colorado, had designed a shoe made entirely from plastic. The Montebellunesi not only believed in the new technology, but (starting with Nordica) they perfected it, substituting "casting" for "injection moulding".

The "all plastic" caused a revolution in the work place, in the organization of production (in particular the role of the manual labourer), in the objectives of the

production function and in the methods for resolving conflicts.

In practice the production methods that were introduced in the District of Montebelluna had been applied for the first time in 1913 by the automobile company created in Detroit by Henry Ford and had rapidly spread throughout the auto industry.

When the ski-boot was manufactured using leather and hide, the key figure was the creative designer (often times the person the company was named after). Along with the plastic shoe came the separation between the planning and the execution of the product, that is to say between those who organized the production (engineers, etc.), and those who actually did the work (semi-specialized labourers).

The planning of the boots came from a group clearly separated from those who were producing them. With the advent of plastics, the hands became separated from the mind. On the other hand, Ford used to say that his workers on the production line didn't have to think. With the plastics revolution the planning ceased to be a solitary act by a single designer. To create a prototype, contributions came from the work of a group of technicians. The plastic ski-boot required more and more mechanization to assemble the various parts from which it was made. The companies became more similar to mechanical companies than to traditional shoe factories.

The introduction of plastics brought about a radical change of materials. For the production of the shell and cuff various types of chemical compounds were used: thermo-plastic rubber, polyurethane, Surlyn and nylon, all deriving from petroleum but with different properties and characteristics.

And this begs a few immediate questions. How many times, praising the know-how of the districts, was the long history of Tradition invoked, the slow sitting still of the quiet Bearers of the Knowledge who constituted the precious casket of the Made in Italy label.

True, very true. But what can be said of the Sportsystem? The plastics revolution, one of the factors that determined its success, came to be perceived as a betrayal of Tradition. The culture of plastics wasn't a part of the heritage of the quiet Bearers of the Knowledge, it wasn't rooted in mythic origins, but was the result of careful trials, awkward experimentations and numerous errors.

Nevertheless, Montebelluna once again won its bet.

XXII

THE SATELLITE WORKERS; SONS OF PLASTIC AND OF 1968

The Ford revolution came to the Sportsystem towards the end of the sixties when in America and the World its rationale were giving rise to discussion on the growing antagonism between the social classes; just when the work of maintaining full employment and the growing costs of the social state were creating strong tensions at government level.

When businesses in the District were hit by the aftershocks of the French Événements (May 1968) and then the *Autunno Caldo* (“Hot Autumn” in 1969), there was panic. The district did not yet have a long industrial tradition. The rapport between the labourers and management had, up to this point, paternalistic. Now it was necessary to manage conflicts that even the most experienced firms with a long history behind them were having difficulties containing. The small business owners were taken by surprise and were unprepared. It was decided therefore to outsource some jobs from the company premises and entrust them to more motivated and enterprising workers.

This is how the small factories making uppers and moulds were brought into being. Often it was the mother company that bought the machines, supplied the know-how and guaranteed the work. To the labourer or technician-turned-entrepreneur there fell the responsibility, the satisfaction and the worries.

But the worries, as the laboratory was far removed from the stormy world of the Unions, were for the most part minor.

Outsourced work, born as a defence and strategy for avoiding conflict, initially represented a regression. Only later on would it become a breeding ground for real entrepreneurs. Satellite working transformed itself into a wind of democracy in the world of enterprise (the popular capitalism of which Giorgio Lago spoke) and the desire to put oneself to work infected all of the social classes.

XXIII

THE CAPITALIST ETHIC INFECTS EVERYONE. THE BOOM OF THE SPORTSYSTEM. THE NEW *FILÒ*

In the 1970s, the meeting between the Catholic and Protestant ethic in the Small Bellies of the Venetian districts created a mixture that exploded into a desire to work.

The Veneto transformed itself into a huge vat in which the quiet Catholic grape, for centuries cultivated in the fertile soil of work-sacrifice and fermented under the action of Protestant enzymes, produced a effervescent,

sparkling wine. The Venetians drank this wine, gulped down this intoxicating new mixture and became inebriated by work. Technicians and workers, managers and directors, teachers and professors, nurses and salesmen all aspired to be entrepreneurs. It was enough that a brother, a sister or an in-law worked in the Shoe Industry and the spark was struck, the desire to open a shop, to give life to a factory. One would begin working in a barn for a satellite company, another would produce buckles, making après ski footwear for a famous brand.

At this point the labourer of the Small Catholic Belly would have stopped. The Catholic ethic taught that one should be content. Instead, inebriated by the Protestant spirit and the ethics of success, the satellite worker got to work. If the artisan was producing après ski boots for another brand name, he soon aspired to having his own Small Brand. His dream was to become ME.

In the Small Industrial Belly the small MEs were increasing at an extraordinary rate. Now the metal workers had in front of them not just the prospect of a celestial reward, but one much more terrestrial and concrete, in the form of consumer goods.

The kitchen needed new furniture: how many precious tables from the old peasant belly were thrown away in order to replace them with Formica tables! It was necessary to buy a refrigerator and a washing machine and install radiators.

In the evening, in the kitchen or in the stall, the celebration of the *filò* returned. It was a return to the past only in appearance. Because in the kitchen, where the whole family gathered, there were boxes of shoe uppers, shoe laces, après ski boots and ski-boots. The new *filò* was no longer a time of stories and of prayers; the new *filò* became “black” work (work done under the table with no paper trail). No more prayers for the deceased, or litanies to the Madonna for emigrants; people were listening to the songs of San Remo or watching television.

XXIV

THE REVIVAL OF TRADITION

The Small Belly that had for a long time nurtured the artisans, let out its rumblings and gurgled with a voice that had the strange accent of Tradition. Plastic - said these gurglings - would not have a long life. The future of the ski-boot would always be leather.

To tell the truth, producing shoes made of plastic was expensive. Just for the moulds hundreds of millions were needed. Who could afford the risk? Only the biggest companies. It was in this atmosphere that some entrepreneurs, in order not to abandon the Tradition of leather and hide, began to move towards the production of alternative sports shoes.

The curious thing was this: even those who seemed distrustful of new things invented new things. Sidi began making the first cycling shoes integrated with the pedal (the first step-in binding) and Alpinestars began creating motocross boots.

Among the new products that took off were the synthetic after-ski boots which signalled a new chapter in the history of the district. This time the innovation had the Montebelluna stamp. For the 1969-70 season the first synthetic after-ski boots were launched: the Moon Boot by Tecnica.

The Moon Boot can be considered the progenitor of all the models introduced afterwards by the numerous companies of the district and remains a fashionable product. The after-ski boot became the hen that laid the golden eggs. It was a product that required limited technology and a lot of creativity and labour. A lot of small businesses jumped onto the Sportsystem bandwagon at the beginning of the after-ski boot success. The district closed the Seventies with some incredible numbers: 511 companies, 12,000 skilled workers and a level of income among the highest in Italy, all of which earned it a mention in Newsweek magazine.

XXV

THE VENETO OF WAREHOUSES

The Boom had beneficial consequences for single people as well as families, improved the living conditions of the towns that reached a standard of living never known before and filled the houses with consumer goods, but had a negative influence on the environment. The beautiful and harmonious Veneto of Country Homes in the Small Peasant Belly, became the ugly and awkward Veneto of Warehouses in the Small Industrialized Belly. Why wasn't the well-being of the citizens and of the companies accompanied by the well-being of the land? During the 'sixties the metallurgy district developed according to peasant logic: the artisans and small entrepreneurs transformed the stalls into laboratories; then they made them bigger; when things were going well, they built small warehouses, whenever possible near the old house, on the same property.

The designers were, with rare exception, decent architects or able surveyors. The technicians, because they possessed the culture to understand and predict, limited themselves to satisfying the customer, they taught them the tricks to obtain building concessions especially where it was not opportune to build. It was the same Local Government Official/Surveyor, friend of the Professional Surveyor, that sorted out the difficult tasks. There were also earnest surveyors, almost heroes, who worried about defending the land.

But the majority of Engineering and Architectural firms had a single aim: to divide and sub-divide the land ad infinitum. With no notion of order governing development, just perpetual growth, everything continued as usual. And so the doctors who were supposed to take care of the land were actually the ones aggravating the illness.

The WORLD was consuming more and more and demanding always more boots, après ski, skates, cycling shoes and motorcycle boots. The warehouses were springing up in the fields like mushrooms in the Montello forest after a rainfall. The boom stimulated a cement fury, that transformed the sweet Venetian plain into a sick organism, whose cells, the warehouses, were multiplying abnormally and without direction. A cancer of Modernism.

As far as the Public Institutions went, they certainly weren't at the level of the Serenissima. The Christian Democrats had an absolute majority in many towns. Their spokesmen were in part a cultured expression of society but one that shared the qualities of the Small Peasant Belly.

Regarding planning one could speak of the Conferences, or during the Course of Studies at Lorenzago, where Dino De Poli used a new word: District Territory. The Territory was an attempt to

supersede the culture of the bell towers, to escape from the Small Peasant and Artisan Bellies.

But the intellectuals didn't succeed in influencing much. Having returned to their Small Bellies, the administrators didn't translate their learning into programs. The Administrators were unable to imagine a different way or they didn't have the will to impose it. The managerial class wasn't managing but rather satisfying the electorate. It behaved more like the National Health doctors, who often filled out prescriptions according to the whims of the patients.

There was however one institution capable of having a high and open-minded vision of things: the Church. But the priests thought of things *sub specie aeternitatis* or in universal terms, when they had to confront ethical values or important religious questions. Regarding the small, practical things regarding everyday life, the priests were also immersed in the Small Peasant and Artisan Bellies. The Priests were so close to their flocks that they shared their short-sightedness. To the Industrialists the Priests asked contributions for an organ or for a nursery school. No priest ever thought about the well-being of the land that was in the meantime being laid waste recklessly.

Neither doctor nor patient ever had any doubt that the illness needed a new cure. Neither the entrepreneur nor the administrator was aware that every hanger in the fields, every dispensation, every enlargement of a

restricted zone, represented a cancerous cell in the body of the territory.

And so, with concession after concession, change after change, the metastasis continued. The disaster of the Veneto, the cancer of the warehouses, was born in a Small Belly which had industrialized with the mentality of a Small Peasant Belly.

XXVI

INTELLECTUALS AND ENTREPRENEURS. THE DIFFICULT DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE UNIVERSAL AND LOCAL CULTURES

Why wasn't there a true dialogue between the Entrepreneurs and the Cultural World? Many administrators, mayors and advisors of the small towns came from the world of the School. Sustained by their Cultural Universe, many professors still held Ciceronian prejudices regarding the *artes liberales e illiberales*, and looked down with condescension on the small business owners, these new rich who were often inexperienced and awkward in the use of the language, and who on certain occasions showed themselves up as parvenus.

The intellectuals on the left were studying Marx, and more young people were reading Mao and Che Guevara, so they all had a high level of factory culture,

they wanted to change the system, they wanted to destroy capitalism; no one held their breath to see if they were ready to negotiate with the small, reactionary, Venetian entrepreneurs who were considered the exploiting owners.

In 1968 the Dispute exploded and turned into a huge clash. An epic cultural clash. The generation of the 'sixties was petty Bourgeoisie, children of a culture above all free, that ignored the complexity, the ironies and the contradictions of reality. The reality of the Small Peasant, Artisan and Industrial Bellies was different from what was written in the books that filled the Libraries and that was studied at University: the majority of the proprietors were not descendents of mythical, bourgeoisie families like the Buddenbrooks but rather artisans, ex-labourers, ex-peasants and ex-white collar workers. The generation of the Sixties, who were passionately interested in the Vietcong or the Chinese peasants, ignored the Venetian metalworkers. Those who preached this anti-rhetoric were in fact an expression of a rhetorical elite: the eternal Italian Arcadia that loves to disguise itself as shepherds without ever having seen a sheep, as workers without ever having known a factory.

Therefore the cultured World of the Small Bellies (priests, intellectuals of the right, of the centre or of the left) could not get in tune with the small entrepreneurs: they ignored them by snobbery, they pacified them for

personal gain or they fought them with prejudice. For their part, the small entrepreneurs were becoming bigger and bigger and were taking on the international competition, and although they perhaps didn't have the same command of the Italian language as the intellectuals, they did speak English; they didn't have a cultural structure like the college graduates but they were the ones who were mixing it with the World. In 1973 the city council of Montebelluna with its Manufacturing Plan became aware that it was necessary to deal with the proliferation of warehouses. Other towns followed suit.

Paradoxically, the local manufacturing plans, which were born from the need to put things in order, in reality increased the disorder. Isolated warehouses were built and proliferated in the small industrial areas. As one of the characteristics of the district was the tightly woven net which tied the businesses together, the traffic became more chaotic year after year and the pollution reached levels similar to those of the Great Industrial Cities.

But that wasn't all. As the Towns were further divided into Quarters, Zones and *Colmelli* (small sub-divisions of a town, pre-dating the current larger divisions), each Quarter, every Zone and every *Colmello* expected, democratically, all of the services that guaranteed the Quality of life found outside the front door. The crazy decades of development, of the Boom, of the Venetian

Miracle, were a flood of small or big follies that made everyone happy in the Small, Very Small Bellies with the dimensions of a Bell Tower. Every ME of the Small Industrial Belly, but with the heart of a peasant, began to make itself heard with all of its pride and its revenge in its confrontations with the Small MEs that were from the other side of the street or the ditch.

Sprecopoli (“wasteopolis”) had similar origins. Confronted by *Tangentopoli* (“bribeopolis”), *Sprecopoli* was much more devastating. The bribes, given to some dishonest Administrators, were modest in comparison to the colossal wastes that stained many guilty Venetian Administrations.

The fact is that *Sprecopoli* was a shared disaster, democratically desired, approved by all parties, by all the priests, by all the associations, by those who governed and by those who were in opposition. This is what the Veneto became during the decades of development. A managing class of Christian Democrats, often honest but short-sighted, or else intelligent but passive, unable to bring any influence to bear.

The opposition was often as honest and short-sighted as the Christian Democrats and available to negotiate in order to bring home some benefit to its clients. Or else intelligent but passive, unable to influence.

The Church was indulgent and understanding, prepared to close an eye for its lost sheep, provided

that they worked off their sins with some gesture of generosity, perhaps by supporting the Church's good works.

XXVII

FOREIGNERS ENTER THE DISTRICT. THE SMALL BELLY BECOMES INTERNATIONAL

In 1974, the Caberlotto family sold Caber, a prestigious ski boot brand, to the multinational Spalding. For the first time, a company from Montebelluna became the property of foreigners. It was an important signal. THE WORLD was so interested in the District that it did not limit itself to merely buying its boots, but had come to understand the strategic importance of buying a company to share in its expertise. By that point it had become universally recognized that the technology to make boots could be found in only one place in the WORLD, in Montebelluna.

The sale of Caber pushed the Caberlotto brothers to found Lotto. Lotto and Diadora (another historic Danieli family company) distanced themselves in part from tradition, which gave pre-eminence to winter footwear, and introduced the production of tennis, jogging, and football shoes into the District. Above all,

multinationals, which were decentralizing their production to Asia (Korea and Taiwan), forced the district's companies to meet them on their turf. It was in this way that the Sportsystem learned to outsource components of its production to countries in the Far East.

The East was not unknown to the Montebellunesi. Groups of shoemakers had been following in the footsteps of Marco Polo for years, travelling to the Canton Fair, held twice a year in April and October, to purchase the much sought after Kalgan Tibetan goat skins, which were used to make after-ski footwear. State officials regulated the transaction in a very peculiar manner. The goats were sold at a blind auction, 75% of the offer was absorbed by the Montebelluna district and the remainder was distributed between France and Japan.

The 1970s, marked in Italy by terrorism, and for this reason known as the "*anni di piombo*" (years of lead), were a period of overwhelming growth and profound transformation for the Sportsystem. While the rules of rural culture had been prevalent, as the district became increasingly international the rules of industrialized society prevailed. Nordica, though under family ownership, had already assumed many of the characteristics of a managerial company. The arrival of managing directors broke with the old ethic of rural society, based on the personal relationships between

owner and worker. Trade unions began intervening more frequently in factory disputes. The accords on workplace medicine, which required medical check-ups and visits for workers, and improvements in workplace conditions were the test bed of these new developments. The first company to lead in this area was Nordica, which was not only the strongest in terms of productivity in the district, but had taken on the role of leader in relations with the local administration. The path forged by Nordica would eventually be followed by all other companies in the district.

XXVIII

NEW EXPERTISE

Until this point in time the expertise of the district was focused on the culture of the product, which became almost an obsession. From this moment forward, Lotto and Diadora had to face other problems including locating sources of production thousands of kilometres away and coordinating the relationship between headquarters in the District and operational branches in Taiwan, Korea, and China. It was a new way of doing business. New vocabulary like “*sourcing*” and “*logistics*,” once unknown, became familiar.

Additionally, the brains of those who remained became accustomed to thinking of the work of the District as something shared with people living on the other side of the world, even though many found this new concept of itinerant space difficult to digest. As travelling technicians were making the journey between Montebelluna and the Far East, the Montebellunesi who stayed put, at least in part, resisted stepping out of the Small Peasant Belly of Montebelluna. In 1977 a group of parents from the hamlet of Caonada expressed their opposition, for reasons of ethnicity, to the fact that their children might mix with those from San Gaetano during summer camps organized by the town council. “We,” they maintained, “*belong to a different culture.*” In 1992, when Lotto shifted some of its production lines to Signoressa (5 kilometres from Montebelluna) some workers chose to give up their positions rather than having to leave their Little Belly.

The District’s opening to the WORLD accentuated its ability to diversify its production. The end of the 1980s saw the development of inline skates. Skates, an old idea dormant for decades (in Nebraska, there is a museum which recounts the 200 year history of skating from its introduction by Dutch pioneers), suddenly burst onto the world stage. Among the leaders was Roces, which began giving technical assistance and

providing the skate shoe to the American company Rollerblade.

The latest idea from the World to enter the Little Industrial Belly, although this was of American origin, was the snowboard. It proved to be a superstar of the 1990s, creating work in the district, although eventually taking the road to China.

XXIX

GLOBALISATION: THE DISTRICT BELLY BECOMES UNIFIED WITH THE WORLD

Globalisation within the Sportsystem has had three facets. The first is outsourcing. The alliance between the brands and local outsource companies began to break down when entrepreneurs realized that, within a few hours of the Veneto, other hands could be found to do the same work at a far lower cost. It was the beginning of the 1980s, and foreign outsourcing, which had primarily interested larger companies, also began to affect the SME. A growing number of shoemakers set off on the road to Eastern Europe.

While communism continued to exist politically, for business interests, the Iron Curtain had already begun to open its folds. Companies started moving their labour force to Slovenia, Croatia, and to other socialist

countries which were hungry for work and consumer goods. 1989 saw the fall of the Berlin Wall, an event which accelerated the Sportsystem's advance beyond the Iron Curtain. Initial investments were modest. The majority of companies entered into direct contact with foreign outsource companies which took on all of the costs and organization associated with transport.

The second facet of globalisation was the widening group of multinationals arriving in the Sportsystem, attracted to the technology and the culture of sports shoes. In 1990, the HTM group arrived and bought out Brixia. In 1993, Salomon, the sun having set on the rear entry ski boot, absorbed San Giorgio in Maser, with which it had collaborated for a number of years. In November of 1995 Rossignol-Lange, the first to establish itself in the district, acquired Meran in Crocetta, which held the Risport trademark. In December of 1994 Canstar, world leader in the production of skates, which had become Bauer, entered into Nike's orbit. In 1997, Salomon-San Giorgio was acquired by the German company Adidas. In July of 1998, Diadora was acquired by Invicta. In 2002, Fila Sport was bought out by Sports Brands International. On October 1, 2004 Bauer Italia was bought by Aksia Group, which gave birth to Novation, which, in turn, acquired San Gallo, Bittante in 2005, and in 2006 Oxtar and Jolly. In 2004, Salomon (and the trademarks Mavic, Bonfire, Arc'Teryx, and Cliché)

was sold to Amer Sports Corporation. Also in 2004, Rossignol-Lange was sold to Quicksilver.

The third facet of globalisation in the Sportsystem has been the influx of non-EC immigrants. In the space of fifteen years around 10.000 immigrants have arrived. The Little Global Belly has taken on the colours of a hundred ethnicities. Only a minority of these are involved in the footwear industry. The majority, above all Chinese, work in small textile and clothing factories.

XXX

GEOX

In 1992, Mario Moretti Polegato had an idea. By poking holes into the sole, he allowed a shoe to breathe, and to prevent water from entering, he used a NASA-developed membrane. It seemed like a sneer at Tradition. Everybody was asking, “*Can it possibly work?*”

In fact, Geox’s miracle worked. In just a few years, *The Shoe that Breathes* had become a star whose story was being told in Economics textbooks. In 2005 Geox, the most important trademark in the district, was listed on the stock market.

In the history of the district there have been many innovative companies. But their innovations had focused on market niches and on the feet of professional athletes. Geox focused on the millions of “*everyday*” feet, whose numbers helped ensure enormous success.

And then, of course, there’s the Geox marketing machine. Perhaps it is this that is the most striking. Geox’s approach went against the traditional ethic of the district, which had always put its stress on the product. With Geox, marketing culture came to the fore, another novelty from the American school of thought.

XXXI

THE RETURN OF THE ARMOUR-PLATED NORDICA

In the mythical 1960s, the idea would have seemed bizarre and naïve. At that point Dolomite, Tecnica, and Nordica belonged to three noble families, each boasting its own history, a collection of medals marking successes, and an unmistakable individuality. Not even Padre Pio would have been able to achieve the miracle of joining them into One Group.

Then, a few years later, the winds of change began to blow impetuously over the card table of the

Sportssystem, shuffling everyone's hand. In 1989 Benetton acquired Nordica from the Vaccari brothers. Two years later Franco Vaccari bought Dolomite, sold by the Garbuio family. In 1998 Dolomite and Tecnica merged. In 2003, in a surprising final act, Benetton let go of Nordica, which finished in the hands of Giancarlo Zanatta and Franco Vaccari. In the ski boot game, the Montebellunesi had all four aces: Dolomite, Lowa, Nordica, and Tecnica. This formidable concentration represented 35% of the world market at the beginning of the third millennium.

Taking into consideration the fact that this same Group possesses Rollerblade, world leader in inline skates, and that Tecnica is the world leader in after ski wear, and one of the first ladies of the hiking boots industry, the weight of such a protagonist in the winter sports scene becomes clear.

The creation of a single corporate entity for its most prestigious brands gave Montebelluna once again the role that, in recent years, had seemed to diminish. Above all, it served as proof that the jealousy and antagonism between the families, both nourishment and poison of the Small Peasant Belly, had been overcome.

The aptness of the old slogan "*Montebelluna makes the world ski*" has been confirmed. All the main world producers of ski boots work within the district.

The ability of Dal Bello, the only family brand of ski boots, to persist on its independent course without subjugation to the big brands continues to be a source of surprise.

XXXII

THE REBIRTH OF LOTTO

Another story which can be understood as a paradigm for the swift and unimaginable changes that the Sportsystem has endured during the last ten years, is that of Lotto.

Founded by the Caberlotto brothers, Lotto had been the main rival of the Danieli brothers' Diadora for twenty-five years. The two brands, like Bartali and Coppi, ran elbow to elbow, competing day after day over sales, prototypes, and team sponsorships. They were the two flags which waved proudly over their respective bell towers, Lotto in Montebelluna and Diadora in Caerano di San Marco.

Lotto underwent a moment of crisis with the premature deaths of Sergio and Giovanni Caberlotto. An array of individuals from all corners of the district rushed to its bedside, including two ex-executives from Lotto, Andrea Tomat (a foreigner from Friuli!) and Gianni Lorenzato, a businessman from the tradition of shoemaking, Adriano Sartor, and representatives from

the most historic families of the district, Franco Vaccari, Giancarlo Zanatta, and Roberto Danieli. The latter had, in the meantime, sold Diadora to Invicta. Although written off for dead, in a few years Lotto regained its global competitiveness. At the 2006 World Cup in Germany, Luca Toni scored for Italy, wearing Lotto shoes, against Ukraine, who were sponsored by Lotto.

XXXIII

GLOBALISATION AND THE DISTRICT'S COMING OF AGE. FROM NAME TO BRAND

The *Belly–World* metaphor has been useful to us in that it underscores the changes which have taken place in the last twenty years. When companies were closed inside the artisan and rurally-rooted Belly, they continued to live with the children of the founders, or die without them. In the international and global district a large number of companies no longer sustain themselves solely on the local placenta.

Businessmen in Montebelluna have broken out of the Small Belly and made themselves known in the WORLD. They have become the adult children of a Global Belly. This is the primary example of vitality within the Sportsystem, having grown and nurtured international brands. The Little Global Belly does not

count solely on the big name brands of winter sports. There is a crowd of small and middle-sized brands that live in the global world with courage and initiative. Each of these is a leader in its niche of mountain, cycling, or motorcycling footwear. If in certain aspects the institution of the family appears to be in crisis (there being more separations and divorces), from an economic standpoint the family remains the basis of the majority of businesses in the district.

Managerial culture has not become an alternative to family values even in the larger companies. Taking a look at the rest of the world, we realise that the importance of family is not necessarily a sign of backwardness. An investigation in *Newsweek* recently underscored the fact that in the luxury sector, many large companies are in family hands. Perhaps in the world of fashion, where decisions must be made rapidly, the family structure retains its validity.

The second sign of vitality is manifested by the satellite industries. Multinationals continue to come to the Sportsystem, because the passion for design, quality, and perfection continues to be its foundation. While labour might cost less in China and Eastern Europe, the Sportsystem's heart continues to beat in synchrony with Tradition: doing what you know how to do, and doing it well. This explains why Small Businesses which produce moulds or technical parts,

for example, maintain their roots within the Sportsystem, regardless of the costs.

XXXIV

A BANK FOR ALL SEASONS

There are tens of banks within the Sportsystem of both local and national nature. This is normal. The smell of money attracts banks like bees to honey. However, among all of these, the queen bee is surely Veneto Banca. It is a local bank which, even in the evolution of its name, shared in and often anticipated the fortunes of companies within the Sportsystem. The Banca Popolare di Montebelluna was founded in 1887, nine years after the reunification of the Veneto with Italy, five years after the market was moved (1872), and therefore, during the years when the artisan district was experiencing the first important phase of growth. With the reform of the Montello, the Banca Popolare was given the role of “Cassa Montelliana”, to which the Bisnenti could ask for loans for agricultural development. In 1966 the bank changed names, becoming Banca Popolare di Asolo e Montebelluna. Although seemingly a small matter, the decision was historic because it broke the confines of the Small Rural Belly. Many low level holders of savings interpreted the fusion as a small betrayal. In reality it

was a decision based on keen foresight and provided a model for businesses in the district which were at the eve of the plastics revolution (1967-69).

To see a similar process in business we had to wait for the formation of the Nordica-Tecnica Group and the re-launch of Lotto. Not by chance, Veneto Banca played a crucial role in both events.

In defining the district I often use a theatrical metaphor, comparing it to the Commedia dell'Arte. From its role as a trusted guarantor as the first Banca Popolare, Veneto Banca later took on many roles: screenwriter, prompter, and director. Without the maternal assistance of the bank, many of the Sportsystem's small businessmen would never have learned to walk on their own two feet.

The current name of Veneto Banca came about with the acquisition of the Credito Cooperativo del Piave e del Livenza in 2000. This event marked the official and authoritative goodbye to the Small Belly, to which the bank had acted as financial placenta. The subsequent acquisitions of Banca Italo Romena, Banca di Bergamo, Banca Meridiana, and Banca del Garda confirm the institute's philosophy of remaining connected to its roots but without being imprisoned by them.

XXXV

IS THE LITTLE GLOBAL BELLY FORDIST OR POST-FORDIST?

Henry Ford, we have said, landed in Montebelluna with the plastics revolution. However, the characteristics of Fordism permeated the cultures only of a limited number of businesses, and even in these, in a rather bland manner. Not even Nordica became a fanatical disciple of Fordism. The companies, but above all the numerous workshops which employed ex-agricultural labourers, did not adopt Fordism's rigidity in production, product quality, and company relations. Flexibility at all levels was a constant necessity in the Sportsystem, as in many other industrial districts. Personalisation of the product, which in Post-Fordism is achieved thanks to a large number of programmable machines capable of modifying production methods and making small-scale production economically viable, has, traditionally, been one of the Sportsystem's most effective weapons. Horizontalism and decentralization, other hallmarks of Post-Fordism, were widely adopted by the Sportsystem in the 1970s. Fordist planning, which requires large amounts of investment and time, never truly existed in Montebelluna in any widespread way. If the Post-Fordist company does not plan but reacts to the fluctuations in the market and to trends (certainly not

spontaneous, but not controlled by any single factor), we can say that the Sportsystem has been Post-Fordist since the 1950s. This speed of reaction can be seen in this spectacular example from 1986-1988: with the crisis in the après-ski wear industry, around thirty companies switched to producing hiking boots in a very short time. This central concept of Post-Fordist competition has been utilized by the small businessmen of Montebelluna without even knowing it, in the same way in which the famous character of Molière realizes, at a certain point, that he is speaking in prose.

One problem of Post-Fordism in the first decade of this century had been the standardisation of languages. In this field, the Little Global Belly suffers the vestiges of the Small Peasant Belly. This archaic distrust is demonstrated in the reluctance to accept new forms of technology. Email is used in the following way. You call someone and say, "I'm sending you an email." Then you write the message. Then you call back and ask, "Have you got the email?" Afterwards, just to be sure, you send a fax.

XXXVI

WILL THE FUTURE OF THE SPORTSYSTEM BE A SMALL IMMATERIAL BELLY?

Enzo Rullani is the apostle of the economy of knowledge. He affirms that, *“today the value of assets is anchored in immaterial elements, which means experience and service are primary to costs and the efficiency of the material process which produced them.”*

According to such logic, work today, with rare exceptions, is no longer material work (using muscular force to transform a primary material into a product), but in ninety-nine percent of cases mental (cognitive), in the sense that the knowledge of those who are working is used to produce more knowledge.

Rullani emphasizes that “even factory work has developed utilizing machines driven by the brain (using knowledge) rather than by muscle.” Rullani’s considerations, coming from one of the brightest scholars on the district phenomena, can certainly be shared. However, they raise certain questions for me. Is the distinction between muscle and brain so clear and linear in all forms of work? Can the hands of a miner which used a pickaxe (muscle) and were then substituted with mechanical rock hammers be compared to the hands of a shoemaker, who designs, cuts, sews and assembles a pair of shoes? In other words, isn’t it true that the muscles of certain manufacturing activities have always been “intelligent,” and therefore, that the manual aspect in

producing certain products is an intrinsic part of “intelligence?” Can we take for granted that the work of the hands, considered the least noble, can so easily be separated from that of the brain?

What if it were true that hands, in their physicality, and therefore because of their muscles, were the true “brain” behind certain products. Could a careless and complete outsourcing of these hands deprive the districts of their “brains?”

Would a Little Global and Immaterial Belly, infatuated with the economy of knowledge and suffocating the satellite industries (which in a cognitive form of capitalism represent a relic of the old Little Artisan Belly) risk becoming completely deprived of its placenta? Would the result of a complete loss of manual intelligence represent a kind of catastrophic and definitive abortion for the district?

XXXVII

ELEGY FOR THE HANDS

There was a time (not yet passed) when progress had cushioned our feet in a kind of redundancy. There is no need to expend energy climbing the stairs when there’s an elevator, no need to walk a few hundred metres when there’s the car. This exaggerated pampering of one’s feet has led to a sedentary lifestyle, responsible

for (on this all of the experts agree) many illnesses afflicting modern man. What do specialists suggest to diabetics to treat and slow some forms of diabetes? Greater physical activity and using one's feet. What's the advice of vascular specialists to improve circulation? Go for a walk, that is, use your feet. What do andrologists suggest for greater sexual efficiency and psychologists to combat depression? Walk. Go for walks. Use your feet.

Every once in a while, some esoteric sect of experts, usually American, informs the WORLD that they have made an extraordinary discovery, supported by the most accurate of scientific investigation. These experts illuminate the secrets of a happy old age for us mere mortals: go for regular short walks, using your feet.

Nowadays, trouble is arising for our hands. Italians, Europeans, and the inhabitants of the mythical West are creating a future in which they will be using primarily their brains. They will achieve cognitive capitalism. The use of one's hands will be the task of poor countries and/or those which are developing. The poor will use their hands, and the evolved rich will use their computers and cad cams. They will use technology (a mythical word). Young people don't want to do a job which requires manual labour because it doesn't seem modern. In a world which is becoming

completely digital, what sense is there in using one's hands?

You might say that in order to use the computer, one must use one's hands. The easy response to this is that hands are merely assistants to the computer.

It's a story which repeats itself. In the past, it was feet. In a few years it will be hands. Whereas today we suggest going for a walk or a nice hike, tomorrow the gurus of psychology will say, "So you want to get back your intelligence, your creativity? Do a bit of manual labour."

The battle between the Hands and the Brain is ancient. Aristotle said that "the soul is like the hand because the hand is the instrument of instruments." Giordano Bruno, in the dialogue entitled "Cabala del Cavallo Pegaseo" (1585) explains the genesis of human civilization as founded upon work and technology. He argues that the distance between man and animals depends more upon man's possession of hands than on his ingenuity.

Thus the question becomes, "Is man more intelligent than the animal because he has hands, or does he have hands because he is more intelligent?"

The district system in Italy enjoys a great inheritance in its manual capability. Outsourcing, although a necessary and inevitable choice, must be undertaken with foresight and thought. We must not fall into the trap of thinking that manual labour is less intelligent

than cognitive labour. Manual labour, in many cases, is the true expression of intelligence.

M. Luisa Silvestre redirected attention to a consideration expressed by I. Asimov. “Eyes are only organs of sense. The brain was only the nucleus of central command, enclosed within the cranium and far from the operating surfaces of the body. The operating surfaces were represented by the hands. The hands felt and manipulated the universe. Human beings thought with their hands. Hands were the response to intellectual curiosity. Hands touched, squeezed, turned, raised, and lifted. There were animals with rather large brains, which lacked, however, hands. The difference was important, very important.”

XXXVIII

THE TIMES OF INTEGRATION

The Veneti maintain, more or less resolutely, that immigrants should respect the rules of Western Civilization and of the countries which host them. They find it hard to believe that immigrants do not hurry to become like them the minute they cross the border.

The logic behind this argument is that emigrants from the Veneto adapted immediately to the countries to which they immigrated, because the Veneti are more

adaptable than Moroccan, Slavic, or Chinese immigrants. What short memories we have!

Are we trying to say that the Veneti, having immigrated to Rio do Sur, integrated with the indigenous population? Alone and isolated in the middle of a forest, they were able to preserve language and customs more completely than the Veneti who remained in the Veneto. When a linguist attempts to research forgotten words in Veneto dialect, he goes to Caxias, in Brazil. Even in Canada, the Veneti continue to speak Veneto dialect or a version of Italian. They found cultural associations for descendants of immigrants from Treviso, Padova, Vicenza, and Belluno. Those who emigrated from the Veneto remained Catholic even in lands that were predominantly Protestant. They did not renounce their religion but built churches and schools in which to educate their children in the faith of their fathers. They are proud to be Veneti.

We Veneti, in turn, are proud of their pride. We are proud that after two or three generations, emigrants from the Veneto continue to search for and love their roots. We Veneti are made like this. We don't easily forget the fact that we are Veneti. Yet, we find it incredible that Moroccans, who are Muslim, want to continue to pray in their mosques and wish to remain Muslims. But, they should integrate! They should convert or, at the very least, practice their religion

without throwing it in our faces. Why do they have to put on such a show during Ramadan? They should be invisible Muslims. It took at least one or two generations for the Veneti who emigrated to France, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland to integrate. Yet, we expect that foreigners behave as we do after just a few weeks. They should do so gratefully, as well, because we have given them an unstable job. It is only fair, as we have made so many sacrifices, while they arrive to a set table and dinner on the stove.

The Montebellunesi have needed many years to accept some novelties (three centuries to convince themselves that potatoes were edible), but they expect foreigners to accept our customs in the space of a day.

If a Moroccan mayor came to Treviso to visit the Association of Moroccans in the World, would he be welcomed by the mayor, as many mayors from the Veneto are when they visit Australia, Canada, or Brazil?

As we rejoice over the fact that our Veneti abroad preserve their, our roots, we are shocked to find that others want to preserve their roots when they come here. We are insulted. We are offended: “Look at them. They come to our country and they don’t want to change.”

At the beginning of the 19th century, the fear of change also existed in the Veneto and in Montebelluna. Tradition was omnipresent and hung over the Veneto

with its prohibitions, with its ironies, and with its prejudices.

In 2006 we ask ourselves, “Have we changed too much, or too fast. Has this swift progress brought us too far from our roots?”

As we try to defend ourselves in this Little Global Belly, the desire for a protective womb grows. A kind of anxiety which in the most sensitive of people, such as poets who anticipate the signs of the times, has been manifesting itself for quite some time.

Let’s take the case of Andrea Zanzotto. Can’t his perception of the World as something hostile, threatening and absurd and his retreat into dialect be understood as representing the desire to return to the Belly of the Great Rural Mother?

For many, who lack the gift of poetic expression, the refuge is Myth.

XXXIX

THE SMALL PEASANT BELLY BECOMES MYTH

The past became idealised and the tough and brutal rural society was transformed into a kind of crib scene of dancing and singing figures who ate wholesome food and, above all, who had values.

Ah, the values of rural society, when everybody spoke dialect and there were few foreigners. Everyone was Catholic, and society was permeated by Christian charity. We are horrified by preachers of hate. We Catholics would never be capable of such wickedness. Not us!

Montebelluna was the birthplace of a poet, a specialist in epigraphs (including that on the monument to the fallen), who in 1926 wrote a speech in honour of fallen soldiers of WWI in which he exalts hatred:

“The great poem of HATRED whose rhyme is exploding bombs and grenades; accompanied by the music of the screams of the dying; modulated by the frozen season’s blinding glare of the snow; screamed at the winds during the assault on Veliki, at Bainsizza, at Passo di Buole, at the Montello, at Grappa, at the Piave, wherever a chest to crack, a back to break, an enemy to kill appeared. Hatred chewed with the smoke of the fire, swigged with long gulps of blood and sweat; hatred glowing happily in the blood on the point of the bayonet; the most marvellous, that point, for the firm flesh, the dagger of Arcade and Sernaglia.”

This gruesome and delirious diatribe was written by Carlo Moretti, a poet from Biadene who has been described as quiet by a modern poet (who certainly hadn’t read the speech in question). Who was the target of this work? It was against the Austrians, the ex-enemies who have become our closest friends. The

Austrians with their companies like Meindl brought work to our small companies for decades and filled our beaches and mountains with faithful tourists. Moretti's speech was written only a few decades ago. How time passes, how we forget.

We forget, and we marvel at the Chinese who live in such unhygienic conditions. We forget that until the beginning of the 20th century Montebelluna had streets filled with filth and children without underwear who defecated on the floors of kitchens. The elderly remember the toilets of the good old days, when instead of toilet paper, corn husks were used! Homes lacked running water, heating, refrigerators, or bathrooms. These were the mythical 1960s.

A very peculiar myth is that of politics. Until very recently the Veneto, and therefore the Sportsystem, had almost always been pro-government, because the Church had always been pro-government. Until the era of the Christian Democrats, it had been the Church who taught the Veneti how to vote.

With the arrival of the French (1805) the Church, *ob torto collo*, allied with Napoleon. Monsignor Dalmistro, the urbane provost of the first decade, was so enamoured with the French that he wrote three sermons exhorting soldiers to sacrifice their lives for Napoleon. All three are interesting reads. (Published in *Il bilinguismo imperfetto dei Veneti. Lettere all'Autorità* of this series.)

With the arrival of the Austrians (1814) the Church became even more pro-government. The Concord entrusted it with the responsibilities of registering vital statistics, maintaining healthcare and schools, and dispensing charity. The alliance between Throne and Altar was complete. 1848 saw the Revolution. General Durando put his headquarters and papal soldiers in Montebelluna. The provost gave a sermon inciting a kind of crusade against the Austrians, and all of the Montebellunesi suddenly found themselves to be revolutionaries. A year later, the Austrians having returned, penitent and frightened, they went back to being loyal subjects of His Majesty Franz Josef.

With the Italians in 1866 there was a moment of hesitation; however the District eventually welcomed annexation by Italy with enthusiasm. They voted solidly for Vittorio Emanuele, King of Italy. The First World War was a tragedy, but then came Fascism with its rhetoric of God Nation Family sounding like victory for the values of the GREAT RURAL MOTHER.

The arrival of the Christian Democrats to power seemed like a return in the times of the beloved Hapsburg Emperor. The Republic, which ensured universal suffrage, should have transformed the Veneti into citizens. Instead, the power to vote remained a choice of the Family. The Christian Democrats understood this clearly. If you could convince the head of the family to vote in a certain way (as had been done

since the time of the Longobards), all the members of the family or clan, men and women, would follow suit. The Tangentopoli scandal marked the end of the family vote. The demise of traditional parties gave rise to the Northern League. Local governments which had been Christian Democrat suddenly went over to the Northern League. Why did such a conversion take place? The Northern League, facing the challenges and fears associated with GLOBALISATION, presented themselves as the standard bearers of the values of the Small Peasant and Artisan Belly. The Small Bellies had found a new placenta on which to sustain themselves. The Northern League invented the MYTH of Padania. Padania is a Belly made up of all the bell towers of the North united against the South, but, above all, against the WORLD of GLOBALISATION.

The Veneti, frightened, had found a New Little Belly with a New Placenta made up of MYTHS.

Myths are the cemeteries, the votive chapels, the tombstones, and the monuments of the First World War, forgetting the fact that bold soldiers had to get drunk before combat.

Myths are the village banquets and festivals, conferences on rural society, and wholesome food without remembering the hunger, pellagra, and infant deaths of that earlier time.

Myths are the country kitchens without shit on the floor and without flies stuck to fly paper hanging from the ceiling, or ready to dive into milk or wine.

Myth is the barn without the filth. Myth is Carnival without Lent.

Myth is the Patriarchal Family and its values, without incredible familial strife.

Myth is Venice much celebrated as The Most Serene Republic and known by few as the Dominator.

Myth is the Loving Mother Church, without a Limbo for un-baptized babies or ostracisation for women pregnant outside of marriage. Without the sale of salvation for a Rich man's generous donation of money, a pew in the Church, or crucifix for the altar. Without the sale of Indulgences for the dead or the terror of hell for little boys who touch themselves. Without easy forgiveness for landlords who starve peasants with rents, and without the benevolent understanding given to politicians who steal, but who concede little privileges to the Church.

Myth is the Erudite Professor who speaks Latin, recites Dante from memory, but has never seen the inside of a factory.

Myth is safety within the Small Peasant Belly.

Myth is the absence of petty crime in the Small Peasant Belly.

Myth is rural civilization without mad women chained to the Hospital of Montebelluna, without the cholera

epidemic of 1836, during which the sick were sequestered in their homes with the healthy, without the cholera epidemic of 1886 or the understaffed cholera asylums with two nurses from off the street, without children being torn to pieces by pigs and dogs. Without the elderly abandoned in barns. Without the 149 beggars and the 2,000 unemployed citizens in 1954. Without the 4,500 thieving woodsmen a year from 7,000 *Bisnenti*.

Myth is rhetoric. It means pitiful lies and interesting half truths. Laziness. Superficiality. Myth is a business. A clever fraud. An embarrassment.

The Veneto in 2000 is a colossal supermarket of Big and Little Myths.

THE SPORTSYSTEM IN NUMBERS

The story of the Sportssystem district can be divided into different periods and each one represents a different type of district.

ARTISAN DISTRICT (1800-1911)

Year	1808	1836	1872	1900	1911
Workshops	20	50	80	350	
Industries				1	4
Workers	60	150	240	1200	

1800 was the time of the seasons, of the Church, of the peasant and the craftsman. The economic heart of Montebelluna was the market. The district was made up of numerous small workshops, each with around 1-5 workers: a master shoemaker, one or two helpers and apprentices. Production was small quantities, hand made; sold directly at the market. Working relationships were chiefly oral and informal based on family and neighbourhood values. There was a strong sense of honour. Trust in the word given.

ARTISAN-INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT (1911-1954)

In 1951 10 TOWNS made up the historical nucleus:
Montebelluna, Pederobba, Arcade, Cornuda, Nervesa
della Battaglia, Caerano San Marco, Trevignano,
Volpago del Montello, Maser, Giavera del Montello.
Population 62,324

Activity	No workers 1936	No workers 1951
Agriculture	9,003	8,776
Commercial	818	818
Industry	2,062	2,573
Craftsmen	348	403
Shoemakers	30	
Workers	600	

The data applies only to the town of Montebelluna.

Time and space expand with emigration and the war. Some workshops evolve into companies where division of labour takes place. The first machinery is introduced, even though most of the work is still done manually. The brands start to be advertised with the arrival of the first catalogues. Mountaineering boots and ski boots establish themselves in the Italian market and the European market is discovered. The relationship between owner and worker continues to

be paternalistic in the tradition of the craftsman. With the conquest of K2 (1954) using boots made by the company Dolomite, their mountaineering boot becomes world famous.

COMPETITIVE FARM LABOURER TURNED FACTORY WORKER DISTRICT. (1954-1974)

The structure of the companies can be defined as Competitive.

Farm Labourer-turned-factory worker defines the type of workers employed.

Year	1936	1951	1961	1974	1979
Farm Workers	9,003	8,776	1,523		
Industrial Workers	2,062	2,573	3,553		
Artisan Companies			84	94	
Industrial Companies			3	47	
Artisan workers	348	403	2,330	214	
Industrial Workers	2,062	2,573		3,396	
Production of ski boots			200,000		4,100,000
Production of après ski footwear					7,000,000

The data relating to the companies and employees only applies to Montebelluna. The data relating to production of ski boots and après ski footwear applies to all the towns in the District.

The economic miracle marks the arrival of plastic, product diversification, prosperity and consumerism. The Winter Olympics held in Cortina (1956) are a tremendous springboard for the “made in Montebelluna” identity. Growth, due to the Italian economic boom, increases demand for ski boots, which become the District’s leading product. Technological innovations culminate in the plastic revolution. The District becomes the world’s leading producer of ski boots (75%) and with the decentralisation of production it modifies its structure, giving rise to many satellite companies.

The hierarchy of the District is by now clear: a number of large brands, a few dozen small and medium brands, and a myriad of satellite companies.

The introduction of plastic heralded the arrival of a series of product diversifications, which enriched the range of sports footwear in the District. The great industrial revolution sees the hiring of many subsistence farmers, who abandon the countryside. The relationship between employer and employee is still on a personal level. Trade unions have yet to make a significant appearance.

INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT (1974-1989)

1985 – TOWNS (10): historical nucleus: Montebelluna, Pederobba, Arcade, Cornuda, Nervesa della Battaglia, Caerano San Marco, Trevignano, Volpago del Montello, Maser, Giavera del Montello.
Population 1977, 76,648

TOWNS (15): Asolo, Altivole, Castelcucco, Vedelago, Istrana

Year	1979	1988	1989	1990
Companies	511	796	674	615
Workers	12,792	8,950	8,511	8,204
Production in 000 of pairs	22,840	27,582	24,086	29,219
Turnover in billions of lire	327	998	898	1,100

The data applies to all the towns that make up the district.

Ownership of the companies is no longer just local. The sale of Caber to Spalding opens the door to other multinationals. The District takes on a shape that makes it unusual in the Italian and world landscape. Product diversification facilitates the formation of

numerous other small companies. Après ski footwear is the goose that lays the golden egg. Lotto and Diadora introduce summer products (tennis shoes and trainers). In competition with the German and American multinationals, they start to turn to the Far East.

With plastic, the industrial culture draws in other sectors, particularly engineering. The role of hired managers grows; Nordica is first to start the trend with others quickly following suit and bringing in managers from the multinationals. The number of farm workers-turned-factory workers linked to agriculture falls. Technicians bring with them a more sophisticated industrial culture.

Several workers contract polyneuritis, a work-related disease caused by contact with adhesives. This makes the role of trade unions more decisive and highlights to the Local Councils what the District has to mean.

New buzz words arrive: Marketing and Sponsorship. The “Blue Avalanche” (National soccer team) wins the football world cup and at the Winter Olympics using footwear made in Montebelluna.

Diversification continues: now talk is of dressing athletes and consumers from head to toe. Companies from the Sportssystem district are present *en masse* at every sporting products trade fair (Ispo in Munich, Las Vegas etc.).

GLOBALIZED DISTRICT (1989-2005)

1999 Population of the historical Nucleus 86,057

2005 – TOWNS (26):

The historical nucleus + Asolo, Altivole, Vedelago, Istrana + Valdobbiadene, Cavaso del Tomba, Monfumo, Castelcucco, Fonte, Vidor, Castello di Godego, Castelfranco Veneto, Ponzano Veneto, Villorba, San Biagio di Callalta, Arcade.

Population in 2004 (in 23 towns) 221,727

Year	1990	1995	2000	2004
Shoemakers	603	556	322	151
Satellite companies		97	128	231
Total companies			450	388
Companies that have delocalised			90	
Workers			Sample	149
Shoe companies	7792	7,909	6,540	5,280
Workers				
Satellite companies	412	1,599	2,357	2,329
Total workers			8,897	7,609
Delocalised	25,000	30,000	40,000	50,000

workers					
Production	29,212,019	39,258,496	31,061,002	39,407,020	
Turnover	1,100,246	2,051,240,	2,405,462,	1,378,264	
In 000 lire		000 lire	000 lire	000 euro	

Evolution of the shoe companies and their satellite companies

Year	1979	1985	1990	1995	2000	2004
Shoemakers	511	756	653	409	304	151
Satellite companies				97	128	231

The 1990's saw globalisation encompass the entire network of companies in the District, which undergoes a dramatic metamorphosis. Ties with the original region start to weaken. After the fall of the Berlin wall and the end of communist rule in Eastern Europe, delocalisation also involves small-to-medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with recognised brands and even their satellite companies. A large part of the production process is shifted to Eastern Europe and Asia.

Competition from emerging economies starts to take its toll. Many large companies take on the characteristics of sales and marketing agencies. The arrival of migrant workers from outside the EU, not only managers and technicians but also factory workers, transforms those towns in the Veneto that

make up the District into a multi-coloured multicultural community.

The phenomenon of concentration, starting with the takeover of Nordica by Benetton, upsets the historical balance of the District, and accentuates the process of “verticalisation”. The number of workshops starts to decline and delocalisation increases.

With the new Millenium the district sees further intensification of the phenomenon of concentration. The district sees the formation of the world’s most important group for snow sport products, made up of the brands Nordica, Dolomite, Tecnica, Lowa (and subsequently Rollerblade). The brands Geox and Stonefly have enormous success with fashion shoes.

The traditional definition of the district (a territory, a specific product, informal relationships etc.) has changed radically in recent years. The territory has become the world itself, a vast and still-expanding range of products, working relationships have changed completely. Just think about language. Up until a few years ago everybody spoke the same dialect; nowadays some companies have such a large number of foreign staff that they are forced to adopt English as their common language.

FROM RADIAL SPACE TO ITINERANT SPACE

We perceive the world around us in two ways: 1 - the first allows us, standing still, to construct everything around successive concentric circles that fade away to the outer limits of the unknown (radial space). 2 - the other is dynamic, and consists in travelling through space being conscious of it in a linear way (itinerant space). During the Middle Ages radial space was perceived with a maximum radius of 10-20 kilometres, reachable in half a day of walking, more or less. Space became less intimidating via the possibility of connecting with family or friendly relations; this type of extended solidarity constituted the extreme limits, the frontiers of the known world.

1 - Artisan District (1800-1911) The places of social interaction in the Small Peasant Bellies are: The Church for religious and political ceremonies, The Shop for work, The Tavern for social relations, The Market for economic activity. All of the population live in radial space.

2 - Artisan - Industrial District (1911-1954) The places for social relations in the Small Industrial Belly continue to be primarily the Church and The Work Shop. The number of factories grows. The middle class spends holidays at the beach or in the mountains. Distribution occurs above all in the regions of Northern Italy by way of the stores. The most famous

brand names attend the big trade fares abroad. The majority of the population lives in radial space. Exceptions are immigrants, soldiers and some entrepreneurs who go out into the World.

3 - Competitive - Metallurgy District (1954-1974)

To the traditional places of social interaction in the Small Industrial Belly many High Schools can be added. The increasing use of the car make work moveable (the commuter phenomenon). Free Time, as well as in the traditional public places, is spent on the soccer field. Holidays are becoming a mass phenomenon.

4 - International District (1974-1989)

Public libraries, museums and theatres are opened. Every year, thousands of Montebellunesi participate in a variety of trade fairs for sports wear. Milan, Munich and Austria are reachable in a day just as the surrounding towns used to be. During the first phase of delocalization many technicians are travelling to the Far East.

5 - Globalized District (1989-2006)

Delocalization even affects the SMEs. Many Montebellunesi live in itinerant space spending periods of time, often long, in China, the Far East and in the countries of Eastern Europe. Weekends, Holidays and general Free Time are spent outside the Small Belly. Thanks to the

Internet, viral relationships are strengthening. And yet, a significant percentage of the population continues to live in its Small Belly. The Small Peasant Belly becomes a MYTH.

WORK ETHIC

1 - Artisan District and Industrial Artisan TOIL WITHOUT SUCCESS

Hunger. Pellagra. Sickness. Emigration. War. Widespread unemployment. Underpaid jobs. Atonement of original sin. Fatigue. Pain. Tradition. Family. Hierarchy. Obedience. Submission. Conformity. Philosophy. Better to suffer Purgatory here on Earth and enter Paradise after death than to enjoy the earthly delights of the WORLD and end up in Hell.

2 - Competitive Metallurgy District TOIL WITH SUCCESS

Boom. The desire to do. Initiative. Tenacity. Family. Consumer goods. House. Television. Refrigerator. Car. Holidays. A second home. A second car. Philosophy. Life is not only a valley of tears. One can better one's position on Earth without necessarily giving up Heaven.

3 - Globalized District

SUCCESS WITHOUT TOIL

World crisis. International redistribution of jobs. A good job. Personal gratification. Creativity. The Computer. Appearance. Free Time. Trips. Consumerism. Bulimia. Anorexia. Emotions. Emotions. Emotions. Philosophy. Does Heaven exist? Perhaps. Better enjoy Heaven. Right now. Here on Earth.

COMPETITION / COLLABORATION

From Catholic Ethic to Protestant Ethic

1 - Artisan District (1800-1911) In a subsistence economy agricultural production increases very little. The contracts favour the landowners and are very hard on the tenants. The peasants collaborate and at the same time the poor steal in order to survive. The shops thrive because the Market with the area around Feltre, 40 km to the north, absorbs the better products.

2 - Industrial - Artisan District (1911-1954) Industrial competition is born but is limited to a few factories.

3 - Competitive Metallurgy District (1954-1974) Contact with the industrialized World boosts competition between the companies. The Catholic

ethic encounters the Protestant ethic. With production decentralization comes an explosion of competition and entrepreneurship.

4 - International District (1974-1989) The competition among the different brand names for ski boots signals a victory for the Montebelluna brand names. The 67 companies worldwide that produce ski boots are reduced to about ten and almost all are centred around the District. Montebelluna produces 75% of all the ski boots in the world. Montebelluna companies Lotto and Diadora clash and compete with the multinationals Nike, Adidas and Puma. Delocalization to the Far East begins.

5 - Globalized District (1989-2006) Competition from the new, emerging countries causes Montebelluna to lose some of its market share. The ski boot remains strong. Production decentralization affects even the SMEs. Explosion of the comfort shoe. Under the influence of the Association of Categories, the Chamber of Commerce and some Institutions such as the Museo dello Scarpone, Tecnologia Design and Treviso-Technology, District companies begin to build networks with projects financed by the EU, the State and the Region.

PRODUCTION DIVERSIFICATION

1 - Artisan District (1800-1911) Production limited, hand made; sold directly at the market. Clogs, *gallozze*, leather Sunday shoes, climbing shoes.

2 - Industrial - Artisan District (1911-1954) Climbing shoes, ski boots, golf shoes, soccer shoes, ice skates.

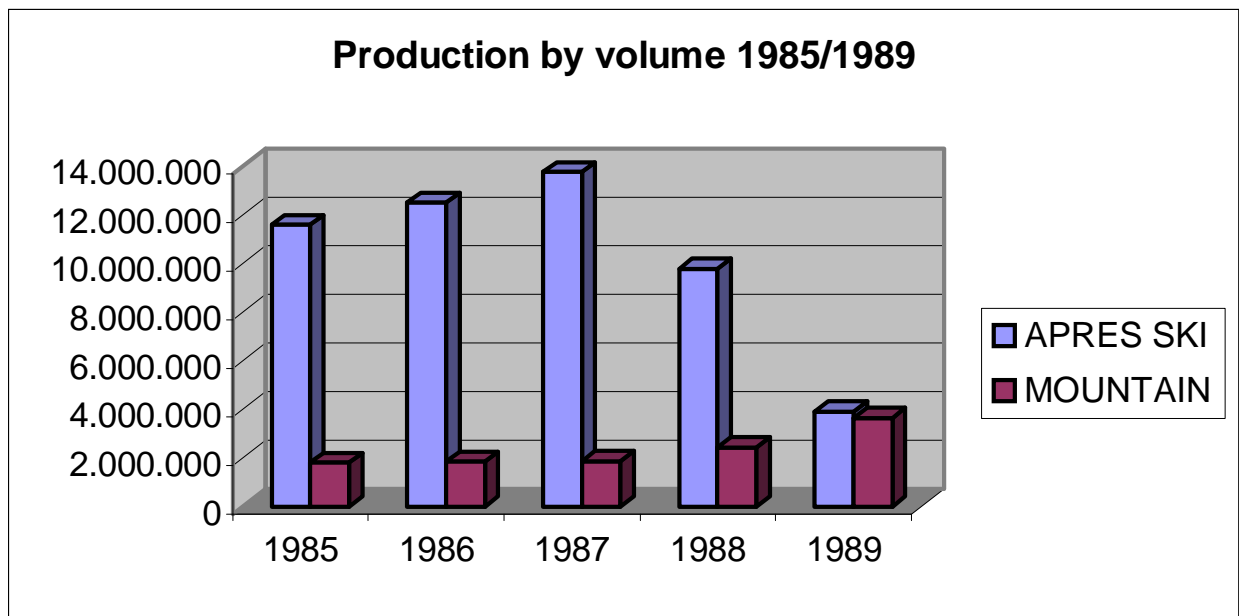
3 - Metallurgy District (1954-1974) Climbing shoes, ski boots. The growth, due to the Italian economic boom, increases the demand for ski boots which become the product leader of the district: from 180,000 pair in 1963 to 700,000 pair in 1969.

4 - International District (1974-1989) Diversification continues: now there is talk of sportswear and dressing the consumer from head to toe. Climbing shoes, ski boots, soccer, cycling, motocross, dancing, tennis, jogging and walking shoes, après ski and cross-country ski boots. Clothes. Companies from the Sportssystem district are present *en masse* at every sporting products trade fair (Ispo in Munich, Las Vegas etc.).

5 - Globalized District (1989-2006) Snowboard, ice skates, comfort shoes. Clothes. Sports accessories (helmets, protective gear, etc).

PRODUCTION FLEXIBILITY

An example of the speed in dealing with a crisis through product diversification can be seen by the shift in production from après ski footwear to trekking boots. In just a few years many companies change to brightly coloured trekking boots, which enable them to weather the negative effects of the collapse in the après ski footwear market.



**PRODUCTION BY VOLUME
1985/1989**

CATEGORY	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
APRÈS SKI	11,582,00 0	12,500,00 0	13,758,00 0	9,778,000	3,910,761
MOUNTAIN	1,800,000	1,850,000	1,855,735	2,433,668	3,642,647
TOTAL	13,382,00 0	14,350,00 0	15,613,73 5	12,211,66 8	7,553,408

TRAINING

1 - Artisan District The school is the workshop. It is the job of the Master Shoemaker to pass down the knowledge of Tradition to the younger generations.

2 - Industrial - Artisan District (1911-1954) The new School is the factory. Each young apprentice is placed next to an older worker who teaches them the job.

3 - Competitive - Metallurgy District (1954-1974) Apart from the company, a private School for Designers, Cutters and Stitchers is opened. The founder's name is Leopodo Zanella. The industrial culture, with plastics, draws on new sectors, particularly from engineering (Zoppas). The

Association of Categories (Industrial and Artisan) starts numerous training programs.

4 - International District (1974-1989) The role of the manager grows. The first is Nordica, and after the multinationals. The metalworkers, bound to the agricultural world, diminish in number. Technicians are the bearers of a more straightforward industrial culture. Added to the Association of Categories training centres are Treviso-Technology, La Stas and the Museo dello Scarpone.

5 - Globalized District (1989-2006) The courses at Ipsia and The Faculty of Design in Treviso come into being. There is a rich choice of training on offer. The FSE Courses at the Fondazione Museo dello Scarpone train hundreds of technicians in a few years: Designers, Stylists, Quality Technicians, Sourcing, Logistics and Marketing specialists.

THE FOREIGNERS

1 - Artisan District (1800-1911) In 1816 one foreigner is registered in Montebelluna. In 1860 the statistics of the give the following information: 15 people left Montebelluna, 13 entered and 1 returned. At the end of the nineteenth century the haemorrhaging of emigration begins in the towns of the Sportsystem.

From Volpago del Montello alone 3,000 people emigrate.

2 - Industrial - Artisan District (1911-1954) From 1911 to 1913 from Montebelluna alone 1400 people emigrated. During the war, above all after the retreat of the Caporetto, around the Montello on the right bank of the Piave, thousands of soldiers were amassed: Italian, French, German, English and American. On the left bank of the Piave thousands of Austrian, German and Croat soldiers. From 1926 to 1949 19 Southerners arrive in Montebelluna.

3 - Competitive - Metallurgy District (1954-1974) Between 1950 and 1959 21 Southerners arrive in Montebelluna. Between 1960 and 1969 a further 71 arrive.

4 - International District (1974-1989) From 1970 to 1979 157 Southerners arrive in Montebelluna. From 1980 to 1989 a further 130 arrive. And yet, in the face of such modest figures, there people are already talking about the “invasion and colonialization of southern hillbillies”.

5 - Globalized District (1989-2006) In the communities of the district 10,000 foreigners from 100 different ethnicities arrive.

GUARANTORS OF THE FAITH

1 - Artisan District (1800-1911) The Parish Priest. The Community Leader and Administrator. The majority of people are illiterate or can write their own name with difficulty. Agreements are oral. Without a piece of paper, the trust of a person was guaranteed first of all by direct contact. The first group of people one could depend on was family and relatives, then neighbours, who were considered almost an extension of the family. The painful web of relationships that held the neighbours together gave good assurances that the behaviour of the worker and the client would be correct. When a shoemaker didn't personally know the people with whom he wanted to do business, he went to the Guarantors of the faith, people particularly well-respected for the role of furnishing information on the trustworthiness of an unknown. The main guarantors were the community Leader, the Deputy community Leader (the Administration was called the Communal Deputation) and the Parish Priest.

2 - Industrial - Artisan District (1911-1954) The Parish Priest, the Community Administrator. The Local Bank. Modernisers perceived *raccomandazioni* (“recommendations” a term for the widespread occurrence of cronyism) as an abuse of power: the

word of one power that favoured an incompetent candidate over a more capable person who wasn't "recommended". In the Small Industrial - Artisan Bellies these "recommendations" were a selection process. In the cases of unknown people it was a guarantee of trust.

3 - Metallurgy District (1954-1974) The Popular Bank of Montebelluna plays a crucial role in the guaranteeing of trust. If the Bank lends money, it means the company is in good health. The first financial advisors appear and open offices of the Association of Categories. The artisans of the Confartigianato inaugurate their office in 1955.

4 - International District (1974-1989) The role of the Unions became more active with the occurrence of polyneuritis. The metallurgy culture comes to an end. The role of the Association of Categories and of the commercial advisors is becomes increasingly important. In 1984 the Museo dello Scarpone becomes the first meeting point for industrialists, artisans, banks and institutions.

5 - Globalized District (1989-2006) Faith is increasingly measured by the metronome of the Banks. Or else by international organisms that guarantee with

a certification of quality that companies respond to certain requirements.

THE CONSCIENCE OF THE DISTRICT

1 - Artisan District (1800-1911) The shoemaker is a type of artisan that merges with the other artisans. A Market Square, reserved for the shoemakers, makes the economic nature of Montebelluna visible. At the beginning of the century there are about 350 small shoe makers.

2 - Industrial Artisan District (1911-1954) The birth of industry and its successes spreads, not only among workers, but also in the public opinion of the Italians; a recognition of the existence of a territory famous for its ski boots.

3 - Competitive Metallurgy District (1954-1974) The slogan *Montebelluna makes the world ski* is created. Industrialists feel the need to something together but admit they are not capable of it. No interest from the public administrations. The adoption of the PDF (Manufacturing Plan) on July 27, 1969 favours a more rational use of the territory and is a precursor to the first PIP (Production Instalment Plan).

4 - International District (1974-1989) Polyneuritis caused by glues forces the District to deal with health problems. Meeting about the 1979-81 crisis. The Community of Montebelluna acquires Villa Zuccareda Binetti. In the 80s companies such as la Stas, Treviso Tecnologia and Tecnologia and Design are founded. In 1984 the Museo dello Scarpone is inaugurated. The new slogan is *Montebelluna makes the world play*.

5 - Globalized District (1989-2006) Newspapers, magazines and television programs speak widely of Montebelluna. Universities study its successes. Research, Doctorate degrees, etc. The District enters the National Club of Districts. The interest of the Chamber of Commerce of Treviso increases and promotes the International Observatory on Fashion and Goods. The Regional Law regarding the districts formalizes the reality of the Sportsystem. In 2006 the Sportsystem becomes the Veneto District. An awareness is born of having become a cosmopolitan district.