

Intervention of Giuseppe Cassano, 1967 EF Fellow from Italy

at the 2009 Eisenhower Day – October 2, 2009 - Paris

In these few minutes I'll try to evaluate how special is the link between The Fellows and EF, and among the fellows themselves.. And also, if possible, to understand the "why", the reasons of such a special link.

The special link

A)--- last August Dan Geisler of EF Filadelfia, suggested to the 2008 US Fellow John Della Volpe, in Italy for a vacation trip, to contact me, in Rome

Note that I am a '67 Fellow; he is a 2008 Fellow: a difference of 41 years. An eternity. and we had never met nor known each other, before

For making short the story, John and Linda, and three wonderful children have passed two days in my holiday house in Tuscany, enjoying with us boating and swimming in the Tyrrhenian sea and tasting Italian food. Both families, now, have good friends on the other coast of the Atlantic Ocean.

Episodes like this, we know, are rather common in our group of people. We all consider this simply "natural": but if you think in abstract there has to be something which makes "natural", for us, and only for us, what is not so "natural", in the "normal" relationships between people.

Let us come back to the special link and other proves of it

B)---Why we are here, so numerous and friendly one to the others??

C)---Why, and sorry if I make a personal example, after 42 years from my fellowship, one full life, in the last year I have devoted to EF, may be one third of my time,

being in the operating Committee of this Conference, spending time for finding sponsors and maintaining continuous contacts with them (and on the occasion I thank the four sponsors we have been able to find in Italy, Enel.... Acea....Ansaldo Energia ...and Boeing Italy), coming to Paris for the discussions on the organization and programs....

and being in the selection Committee of last year multination program

and in the nominating committee of next year Women leadership program

and in the Committee that has organized in February last, a very successful Eisenhower day,

and, from now on, in the Alumni Advisory Council

and so on..

And certainly I am not an exception: I have never been alone: All the Italian Fellows have given their time and efforts as much as they could: and our successes pertain to the big majority of the Italian Fellows, from the 8 Fellows present in Paris, to the other remained at home.

And all of us know that what I have described for Italy, is the experience of dozens of EF Associations;

D)---Why so many people, from so many different countries, have the same positive attitude towards EF, towards the memory of their stay in the US as Eisenhower fellows, towards all the other Fellows, disregarding country of origin or year of fellowship???

E) ---Why do they remain so linked to the EF experience, to Philadelphia main office and personnel;

F)---why do they participate to the International Conferences, like this, so numerous and so assiduously;

G)---why a Fellow like Kirdar, after more than 50 years after his fellowship, is so worried, and consequently active, about the funding of the Fellowships??

Which, then, the reasons of such special link??

I don't know if the answer I am going to give is the right one, and if on it other fellows may agree.

1---It is certainly true that the improvement of our professionalism acquired during our stay, in the US, as Fellows, has to be considered a very important factor;

2---It is also true that, being part of a very qualified and outstanding network, many of us, and I among them, have managed the various contacts as to maximize results and successes;

3---it is true that the EF philosophy: to enhance dialogue between nations and peace to the world, is also a stimulus to appreciate more and more the EF Fellowships activities;

but these matters, anyhow, though important, are not enough, according to me, to justify our affection, our closeness, our enthusiasm, I would say our unique feeling, for EF, in any period, without interruptions, of more than half a century.

Then, which is the answer? When we had been chosen as Fellows, we really had the "most important experience in my life" - as Camilla, last Fellow from Italy, has declared after her return. It is useless, for us, all Fellows, to give details: we know each of them:

A - from our meetings to the very top (up to Nobel Prizes, or top Ministers or alike),

B - to the exclusive Seminars,

C - to the visits to the most important and prestigious Institutions and companies,

D - as well as to the visits to some of the wonders of your country,

E - up to the so many proves of hospitality and warm welcome by an army of families and volunteers,

F - without citing the continuous friendly, accurate, helpful assistance given us by all the personnel of Philadelphia headquarters,

G - in addition to the nature itself of the fellowship: so open-handed, broadminded and liberal (at my times, her length was 8 months..., and this allowed extraordinary going in-depth in our individual program)

And, compared to such a huge gift, capable to change our life, nothing was asked to us, on return. we were receiving a lot; without giving anything.

No "*do ut des*".

Nothing to reciprocate.

I think I have at last reached MY answer: It is this absolute asymmetry, between the received and the given, that strikes our soul, hits our emotions, and therefore is at the basis of the very special feeling we have with EF.

A confirmation?

In a mail of one week ago, Dan Geisler, of EF Philadelphia, wrote, speaking of my new friend John,

"the event reinforced his belief that Eisenhower Fellows are the most remarkable people in the world"

This is also my idea.

Paris, October 2, 2009

(G.C.)