

RADIO LA VOZ DEL NAPO

When a simple man is at halfway between Indiana Jones and the sanctity

The short history of Father Humberto Dorigatti and his radio in the “selva” of Ecuador

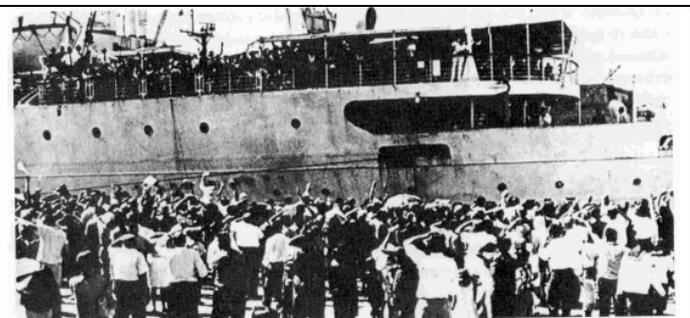
By Massimo Cerveglieri (massicer@inwind.it)

A NIGHT, AT MY RADIO

When, the night of the 6th of may 2003, I listened to a radio from the hearth of the Amazonic selva in Ecuador, naturally I was surprised for that very interesting listening, but I didn't know who should have answered to my reception report.



The radio of that night was “La Voz del Napo”, transmitting on 3279,5 Khz, from Tena, a very little city, about 1500 citizens on my maps, administrative centre of the Napo province, 110 Km s-e from Quito, the capital of Ecuador. If you look at the map above, perhaps you cannot find this city immediately, but it is between the letters “A” and “D” of “Ecuador”, after the Andes, already on the direction of the Amazonic rain forest. After that listening, of course, I sent a



Genova, 1947. Partenza della nave di emigranti e missionari.

Genova, Italy, 1947, the leaving of the ship with emigrants and missionaries

reception report to that radio, as I have made many times, I should say like an automatic reaction. But, this time, after few weeks, I received a letter, from Tena, in a perfect italian signed “Padre Umberto Dorigatti”, who was



Prima messa 8 dicembre 1954

The first mass of Father Dorigatti, the 8th of dec. 1954

surprised that the voice of his radio, destined only to reach the indios of that part of the rain forest, there, practically behind their church, was listened so far. Father Dorigatti wrote to be italian, from the north of the country, but that left

his homeland in 1946 for the Missions in Ecuador. In that occasion, he wrote to me also that he was returning in Italy, for his 50th as Father, on the lake Garda, where he still has a brother and other important persons. Once in Italy, I called him, with a very interesting conversation, and, before his



This is Father Dorigatti: the... true life of a Father in the amazonic rain forest.

returned in Ecuador, he sent me a brochure, printed for this occasion by his community, with all the interesting life of Father Dorigatti.



This book has struck me so much that I couldn't not write something about this amazing man, at halfway between the sanctity and an action movie hero.

On August 1946, Father Dorigatti left Riva del Garda, for Ecuador, crossing at first the Atlantic Ocean to Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, and then, on the 30th of March 1947 arriving to Guayaquil, during a travel, today we should say, like a true India Jones in South America. I cannot report all the adventures of this man in his life, because the brochure has about 50 pages of these ones. Only, think that when he arrived at last in Tena, he lost many teeth, absolutely without a doctor able to treat them, had his feet infested by many types of tropical worms, and a lot of amebes and parasites infected his body. But, he had to walk in the tropical rain forest

radio “La voz del Napo” is very poor, goes on only with volunteers, has no secretaries, and, now, Father Dorigatti



Tena, August 2004. A detail of the front of the Radio “La voz del Napo” with Father Dorigatti and two collaborators of the program “quichua”.

without shoes, even with the worms in the feet, the cutting stones, and more, because he had worn out



The entry of the radio “La Voz del Napo”, with Father Dorigatti, Dario and Wilber, two “locutores”, speakers, of the “quichua” program.

all his shoes! However, he didn't think to his health, because the first thing that he learned was to live like an Indio, to hunt in the rain forest, to speak the quechua language, to go on the canoe on the river Napo. Probably, this was the key that allowed to Father Dorigatti to stay alive: he thought that if the Indios were there from thousand of years, living like them, even he could survive well there. The brochure follows with histories about an “Eldorado”, when gold was discovered in the Napo river, with histories about slave men, and, this is perhaps the most important, the construction of the cathedral, the schools, the radio. So much, to do an adventures movie, in few words. Incredible! Naturally, as the reality always is better than every imagination, Father Dorigatti had to see even a war, by Peru, in 1996, not declared, but however fought. The



write to me that he is looking for a director able to manage the radio and its programs. He says that he is 77, and now he cannot make everything, including



the radio management. However, the radio is addressed to the indio population, that lives in the amazonic rain forest, speaking the chichoa language. Every morning and every evening there is a two-hours program in this language for them. In his letters, Father Dorigatti has not specified the times of these broadcasts, but I think that them must be not very well definite. And then, after various news, the radio broadcasts “Radio Maria”, the religious network, that can supply appropriate programs. Now, as specified above, Father Dorigatti is looking for a director for “La Voz del Napo”.

As last, I ask to all of you to send to the children of the mission and of the schools of the country everything can be useful to these very poor children; I have done and I do it now, since I received the letters from Father Dorigatti, sending several boxes containing pens, pencils, ecc., and I can confirm that the mail arrives surely in that part of the world. Think to one of these poor children saying “I received a gift, the first in all my life, from a man in a strange country, called... But I will never forget him.” If you want to contact me, here you have my e-mail address. The one of the mission is: P. Humberto Dorigatti, Mision Josefina, Tena (NAPO), Ecuador.

Massimo Cerveglieri, massicer@inwind.it