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AIDS:

THE PARALLEL PLAGUES

Almost at the end of the year, OMPO, the monthly paper "for a new moral at the edge of the century", has sponsored its latest exhibit on aids in Catanzaro, the Capital of Calabria, in Southern Italy, with a big success of public, media and public authorities.

The show is called "Aids: Le Pesti Parallele" ("Aids: The Parallel Plagues"), and focus on the similarities of the three most important epidemics of the modern ages: the bubonic plague of 1347/1351, the syphilis of the 15th century and the aids of today. The common points, of course, are about the social milieu of these times and the responsibilities of the religious and political powers, and not about the medical nature of the diseases.

The exhibit was really imposing: hundreds of posters from all over the world, dozens of thousands of clippings from different papers, magazines, newsletters in many languages, brochures published by various organizations, and videotapes, photos, graphics, slides...

The materials have been collected by the Director of OMPO, Massimo Consoli, from the very beginning of the aids epidemic, July 3, 1981, and also from before that date, with documents that (now!) sound like a premonition.

Between the numerous participants at the conference it is necessary to recall the Senator Antonio Alberti, member of the Parliament and of the Health Commission in the Italian Senate. The Senator spoke about the difficulties in the government to understand, to deal with and to care for this new, unforeseeable disease.

Dr. Marina Splendore, biologist and chief of a State-financed center for drug addicts has shown her studies on the peculiarities of the Italian situation with its 65% of aids victims, in 1980, of 12% of gay and bisexuals (also, according to the most listened Italian researcher on aids Prof. Fernando Aiuti, this percentage has to drop dramatically: in 1990, gay and bisexual men with aids should be only one 8% of the total).

A spokesperson for the LILA (Lega Italiana per la Lotta contro l'Aids = Italian League to Fight Aids) has pointed his speech on the discrimination against the sero-positives and the victims of the disease, defending the gay way of life and the rights of anyone to practice anal sex (and, by the way, this representative is not gay at all!).

Grants for the realization of the exhibit and the conference came from the local government of the Calabria Region and from the Secretaries of Health and Social Services. The Secretary of Public Education has officially invited all the students to participate. The factual organizer of the exhibit has been the "Lega Regionale delle Cooperative" ("Regional League of Coops"), a strong financial trust headed by a very courageous woman, Dr. Franca Fortunato.

Franco Garofalo

P.S.) It is useless to say that this manifestation was really very important because for the first time in our history, public powers sponsored and paid for an exhibit and a conference organized and headed by a gay periodical.
