

Apology

*Che me manca!*

Fiat 500: Reflections  
on an Italian Icon

Uk Trip Story –  
Stonehenge

Secret of Success  
in China

## Che me manca!

di Antonio De Curtis "Totò"



l' tengo 'è llire, nun me manca niente,  
me pozzo accattà chello ca me piace:  
na statua d'oro, nu vapore argiento...  
palazze, ville... case in quantità.

- Chi è cchiù felice 'è te?! - mme dice 'à ggente.

- Si ricco, si guaglione... che te manca? -

E chest'è overo, nun me manca niente.

Sulo na cosa mme vurria accattà...

Na core... tutto core 'è tenerezza  
ca me valesse na muntagna 'è bbene...  
ca me sbattesse 'mmano p' 'à priezza,  
cuntento pe mme dà 'à felicità.

Dipende a me; nun voglio aspettà ancora.

Tuzzulijaje a porta 'è na figliola:

- Che t'aggia dà pe m'accattà stu core?

Qualunque prezzo, di, che t'aggia dà? -

Me rispunnette cu bella maniera:

- 'O core nun se venne... se riala...

crediteme, ca io ve sò sincera...

cu 'è llire 'o core nun se pò accattà!

# fao Casa gazette

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E-mail: FAO-STAFF-Coop@fao.org  
Website: faostaffcoop.org  
Printing by: NEW INTERSTAMPA - Roma  
Via della Magliana, 295 - Tel. 06.55282956 Fax 06.55178798  
Finito di stampare: Settembre 2013

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SEPTEMBER 2013

Cover:

Bright Red Fiat 500

Contents

2

**Poet's nook**  
**Che me manca!**

*di Antonio de Curtis 'Totó'*

5

**Apology**

6

**Fiat 500: Reflections  
on an Italian Icon**

*by Peter Steele*

17

**Uk Trip Story - Stonehenge**

*by Gail Lugten*

22

**Secret of Succes in China**

*by Fahmi Bishoy*

30

**Recipes:**  
**Roast Veal with prunes and  
orange juice**

31

**Mixed Vegetables in oven**

Typewritten electronic contributions for the FAO CASA Gazette are welcome. These can be in English, French, Italian or Spanish - articles, poems, drawings, photographs, etc. in fact anything interesting that staff members and/or their families in Rome or the field may like to contribute. No anonymous material will be accepted, and the Editor reserves the right to choose and/or reject material that is not in keeping with the ethics of the Organization. Send contributions electronically to the Editor at FAO-STAFF-Coop@fao.org or leave signed copies with the COOP Office on the ground floor of Building E. The deadline for editorial material is due on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month preceding the date of issue.

The Editor may schedule articles according to the priorities and editorial requirements of the FAO Staff COOP.

The FAO CASA Gazette is published every month.

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# APOLOGY

*The Editorial Committee apologizes to the readership for the publication in the August 2013 edition of the Gazette of the article titled “Georgia and Armenia: Crossroads of Europe and Asia” by Tony Grey (Historian). Due to the rush to get the Gazette finalized and printed before the printers closed for holidays from the second week of August, adequate attention was not paid to the contents of the articles and final checking of the ciano. This is regretted since we have now realized that there are typos in some articles and in particular the article mentioned above contains several inappropriate statements and more than once gives the personal questionable opinion of the author which is not shared and does not reflect at all the opinion or thoughts of the Editorial Committee members, nor of the Board of the FAO Staff Coop or the Organization. Indeed some statements can be considered offensive to some Member Nations. We deeply regret this unfortunate circumstance and trust that those concerned will accept this apology. We will be more vigilant and severe in future in screening articles received to avoid repetition of this most distasteful incident.*

Edith Mahabir  
Publicity Officer  
FAO Staff Coop

# Fiat 500: Reflections on an Italian Icon

Peter Steele

*There are few cars with characteristics that immediately make you smile. Design, the shape of the bodywork and the images that the car provokes in the mind's eye sometimes suggest a character all of its own. Whilst modern car designs are trapped into the constraints imposed by safety, energy efficiency, platform sharing, functionality and more, earlier designs were frequently based upon the quirkiness of the designer; sometimes they did little more than chase fashion or flatter the driver.*

*Designs also come to represent the period on which they were developed. And here it is that the diminutive Fiat 500 from the 1950s remains that supreme example that seems to evoke the romance of a different era; and not simply the motorist's answer to the narrow streets of the ancient towns of Italy. This was a time when the donkey, mule or oxen could still be found at work in rural areas, when the devastation of the war years was still fresh – the country had recently fought a belligerent war, civil war and war of occupation - and when Cinecitta and Federico Fellini were just getting into their stride. Before the decade was out along came the Fiat 500.*



Red Fiat 500 sparkling in the sun in Tivoli. July 2013.

## Providing private space

Open any popular book or watch any film clip promoting Italy to the world and it will feature the Fiat 500 car that 50 years ago began the motoring revolution that shifted Italians in their hundreds of thousands away from their Vespas and Lambrettas. There is, after-all, only so much that can be accomplished on two wheels; four wheels and a fabric roof offer that measure of privacy that only enclosed space can provide; and particularly in winter.

This was as important in the 1960s as it is today given traditions that continue to tie new generations of young Italians into their family; meaning, in reality, the lack of cheap housing that enables couples to find a place of their own. Whilst living with the parents has some distinct

advantages for providing washing services and food on the table, the main downside of family homes is lack of privacy.

A small box on wheels and a dark corner in a quiet public car park, on a country road or at the back of an industrial estate at night offered distinct opportunities. One of those well-promoted statistics of the time suggests that some millions of Italians lost their virginity or were conceived in the back of Fiat 500s – notwithstanding the strictly limited space available and the contortions required.

Like much of marketing publicity of the day, bikini-clad or mini-skirted girls were used to promote the car on the open

road, in the mountains and at the beaches (*an approach that has never gone out of fashion – sex sells, of course*), but the marketing men were quickly out-paced by the clients with sales messages that could only be used obliquely. Looking back it is hard to appreciate the social revolution that the little car and its mobility provided at the time.

### Fiat 500 – classic design

The 'new' Fiat 500 was a revelation in design; it followed the layout of the popular German-made VW Beetle (*although, of course, the 'Beetle' name was not used officially until the early 1960s; that car was simply called the VW Type One or simply 'VW', 'Volkswagen' or, more colloquially in English,*



Under the bonnet. This is what you see with the bonnet opened: petrol tank behind the dashboard, spare wheel tucked into the well behind the bumper with the battery next to it (but hidden) and that minuscule space on top for a stuff bag. The new retro-Fiat 500 has the engine here. Credit: [Otoreview.blogbot.com](http://Otoreview.blogbot.com).

'Veedub'). The Fiat 500 was rear wheel driven, with the motor at the back and a small luggage space together with the petrol tank under the bonnet at the front; *(take a minute to digest that particular feature – all that fuel just above your knees – and with the 12 V battery in front of that too).*

The car was squat and rounded in shape, a little under three metres in length and 1.3 metres high. You needed to be small to sit comfortably in the car; and it provided two shallow front seats and a bench seat behind which could, when required, be really filled up. The car weighed 470 kg unloaded with a carrying capacity of around 200 kg – people and goods.



Yellow Fiat 500 Tivoli. Door to engine compartment modified to improve air flow and looks. July 2013

The body had a highly respectable aerodynamic resistance coefficient of 0.38 – used for measuring and comparing airflow when the car is moving – that helped with fuel economy, access to power, etc. Just as well, given the minuscule power rating and the impossibility of maintaining reasonable speeds when climbing long slopes. Do *not* get stuck behind a Fiat 500 on a winding country road in the hills in your latest German-made 'go-faster' special; better to stop for 20 minutes and enjoy a coffee at a local road-house and wait in comfort for the Fiat 500 to reach the top first.

The car was fitted with a two-cylinder air-cooled engine – much like the VW Beetle – except the cylinders were upright. Engines were small at around 500 cc (i.e. half litre) creeping up from 480 cc to near 600 cc over 18 years of production. The Fiat 500 was replaced with the Fiat 126 (i.e. *the version with the rectangular body*) which continued the micro-car trend. It came with a 700 cc engine by the time production ceased in 1994. You can buy original Fiat 500s that have been retrofitted with the Polish-made 126 air-cooled or 126bis water-cooled engines; it represents development of design over >40 years for a vehicle that no one wanted when production finally ceased. Great design and automotive excellence; pity about the market *(which quickly became lost as the Soviet Empire imploded – and second hand Golfs flooded into Eastern European markets).*

### Cars for the masses

The Fiat 500 was the cheap and practical car-about-town-of-the-day; and it helped define the design of small cars into the next 20 years. Others were prompt to





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follow it, and estimated 25% of the cars made in Europe during the period by Fiat, Renault, Simca and others produced similar design cars; if not quite as small.

The Citroen 2CV and the BMC Mini (previously called the 'Mini-Minor' or 'Austin Seven' – again, it took time for the 'Mini' name to become official), however, demonstrated the efficiency of front-wheel-drive with separation of mechanicals and people; and the shift from the three box design exemplified by the Fiat 500 to the two box design of the Mini and similar cars. No mass producer now makes rear-engine cars.

Notwithstanding packaging, however, the Fiat 500 first introduced in 1957 remained in production until 1975; it was, and remains, a car of its day – mobilizing the people, helping to re-

industrialize a country coming slowly out of a devastating war, simple in the extreme, suited to the roads, towns and countryside of its homeland and, crucially, highly reliable. It was never as versatile as the French alternatives – Renault R4 and Citroen 2CV, nor as fast, agile and stylish as the BMC Mini, but >3.8 million Fiat 500 cars were built/assembled under the Fiat badge or by licensed manufacturers in half-dozen countries worldwide from Germany to New Zealand and from Austria to Argentina.

### All Fiat 500s are the same

Like the VW Beetle, however, the shape remained largely the same throughout, but with modifications that continued to see small but incremental changes in engine capacity and power rating (from 9 kW to 18 kW – minute outputs in the light



*Fiat 500 lifestyles.* Young couple, great view, pristine little yellow car and those opportunities offered to escape from the routines of everyday life. The picture comes from an advertisement from the late 1960s, and shows the model L, easily identified by the additional bumpers (i.e. decorative nudge bars for parking). Credit: Team-BHR.com.



*Classic car club.* Nine Fiat 500s in a row (if you include the Autobiachi Giardinieri poking out of the line in just before the van). A Sunday morning meeting by a local club in Tivoli. 'Fun in the sun' with a great view over Rome and cars that represent the time, money and affection invested by their owners in renovation and modifications with all kinds of non-standard add-ons.



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of modern engines), improved layout, seating and comfort inside, and the shift from 'suicide doors' (that opened frontwards) to normal doors (with hinges at the front).

Suicide door cars identify the earlier 'Nuova' and 'D' models made from 1957 to 1965 and, given the susceptibility of the car to severe rust, they remain rare today. These models also featured fabric roofs (rooves?) that could be folded back to follow the sun, but were notorious for leaking rain as the fabric aged.

Woe-be-tide the unthinking driver opening his door on the move in his early model car – slam it would go as the wind whipped the door out of his hands – and beat it back against the rear of the car (with little in the way of protection from the leather strap door retainer to hold the door in place.



Gardinieri station wagon. Versatile to a fault; chromium bumpers, hub caps and trim, extra-long sunroof, side indicators and that load carrying capacity. Note the doors, which hinged the wrong way round; many cars of the time did the same and this always challenged ladies in skirts when making a dignified exit.

'F', 'L' and 'R' models followed chronologically from 1965 to 1975, but you would need to be something of a cognoscenti to follow and appreciate the differences involved. Suffice to note the change to all metal construction for later models, the all-synchromesh gearbox (so you no longer needed to 'double declutch' to mesh the gears when changing), comfort, etc. that featured as the little car came under increasing competition from cars that better suited an increasingly affluent 1960s Europe – the main market.

Only the diminutive 'Gardiniera' differed significantly. For all its size, it was fitted with the slightly larger station wagon body, which featured a rear door. It retained the engine at the back, but this had been turned on one side to provide for a flat loading platform. The engine was accessible through a panel set into the floor of the car. The Giardiniera always came with suicide doors and, towards the end of manufacture, was badged as an Autobianchi – a name that has long since been relegated to historical Italian motoring.

Run a Fiat 500 in a cold climate and you'll know what it was like in the old days when 'heaters' were listed as 'extras'. It's this thing about all the heat being generated in the rear of the car and then supposedly blown forward through ducts in the floor. You could just feel that additional degree or two above freezing with your hand held up against the air vent next to the seat; demisting or defrosting the windscreen was a pipedream. You needed to carry a couple of blankets to keep warm.

Same thing with control of the car in wind. It was highly susceptible to wind



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blow and would snake all over the road when caught in gusts and you needed to concentrate, keep your wits about you and hold the steering wheel steady. Funny when you thinkg about it – being assembled in New Zealand - the world's windiest country. It was always a challenge when approaching another Fiat 500 on an exposed road in Canterbury.

What the original car never did have was a petrol gauge; this came later. You needed to keep note of when you had last filled your car, have some feel for consumption per journey (5 L/100 km was typical, so you could cover around 500 km on a full tank) and, importantly, keep your eye on the coloured light that winked at you from the little round speedometer as the fuel tank emptied. When the light remained on you had around 80 km in which to find that petrol station. Many cars of the time came without proper fuel gauges.

### Owning a Fiat 500

Would you buy a classic Fiat 500 car today? You might. Not as a road vehicle, but for fun and as simply one more small investment towards your retirement planning. Prices are seriously climbing. You could find broken/abandoned Fiat 500s in your local auto-demolizione just a few years back; now you see advertisements offering non-runners and wrecked vehicles for E2,000 and more (particularly if the documents are 'in order'). Working hacks are double this figure, and can be found in most back country towns or quiet city suburbs up and down the country; with more in the south. Renovated vehicles sell at outlandish prices sometimes well in excess of E8,000. Vehicles are being shipped by the tens (may be the hundreds too) to classic car collectors everywhere.

Cute and highly desirable in today's classic car markets the Giardiniera station wagon has also climbed in price as numbers have fallen; just 300,000 were originally made. Commercial versions are even more difficult to find. And too the 'Jolly' – the cut down roofless and door-less version of the saloon sold for beachside/holiday use.

Earlier this year La Manovella (an Italian classic car magazine) carried a private advertisement for a 1972 Fiat 500 L for E14,000 – and it was basic; this is approaching Abarth territory pricing for racing Fiats. If *nonna*(grandma) has got an elderly Fiat 500 (i.e. one-owner, black targe, low kilometres, never welded, documents, etc.) stashed away in the box at the end of her garden and you fancy yourself as a 'Classic Car' owner – Sunday morning runs with the other cognescenti, blazers and tie with the right badges, an understanding of marques, etc. and would like to capture a small part of Italian heritage that is likely to be profitable - make sure that you're around when she's preparing her will. Remember, the car sold for around 500,000 Lira when new (i.e. around E250 in today's money).

Classic Fiat 500s are a deal of fun – forget the new ones; they're simply cashing in on the retro-design that helps sell images – and you *can* own an original. Don't expect to use it as everyday transport – you can (and people do), but they're slow in commuter traffic and uncomfortable for long travel. They have neither the acceleration, brakes nor steering of the modern equivalent; they're really small (and can't easily be seen by that moron in the BMW X-series pushing his way into the traffic – he may run over

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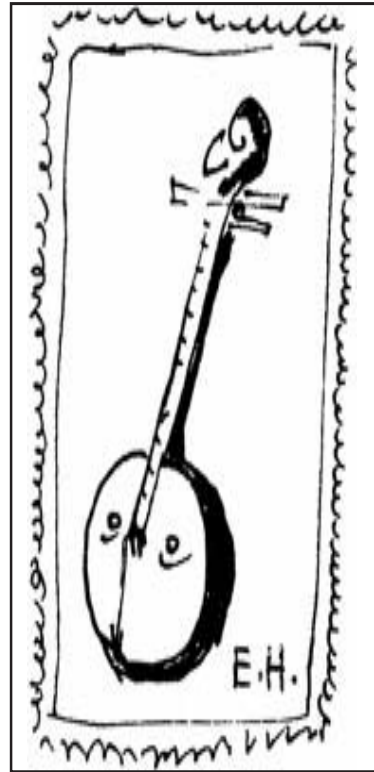
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you), and crucially, you would not want to be involved in a serious road accident when driving one – old car designs of this kind do not offer protection to those inside. For all that, however, only the original car sounds real – all that air cooled engine clatter. *Fabulous.*

That's not to say you can't do either – drive them regularly and drive them long-distance. On every routine journey in Italy you'll always see a Fiat 500 running around somewhere. And those long-distance runs? Check out the story of the Australian couple Lang & Bev Kidby who, in 2007, drove their 1969 'Bambino' (the Australian market name for the F500) 32,000 km around the world in 100 days. Or get hold of a copy of 'La bizzarra impresa' by Danilo Elia and Fabrizio Bonserio which describes their road journey in 2005 in a 1973 F500 from Bari/Italy to Beijing/China through Vladivostok/Russia. They also took 100 days, and covered 16,000 km.



*Carabinieri driver. One of the more popular of the international Fiat 500 images – exploring its potential as an anti-crime car; catching thieves, presumably, when they fell about laughing. Credit: ANC Medicina (Bo).*

The journeys confirm the reliability of the original design; and the ease with which repairs, maintenance and servicing can be undertaken just about anywhere. Sure you can own and run a classic Fiat 500, and the experience is one to be cherished. You can also get a deal of fun from a push bike and it will certainly be better for your health.

### **There's always someone behind good design**

The Fiat 500 was attributable to the internationally respected Dante Giacosa who was the chief design engineer for Fiat from the end of the war through to the mid-1970s; the golden age of car design according to some. He was one of a handful of men in the industry that dominated worldwide car design, and is perhaps best remembered today for the contribution of the Fiat 500 (and to a dozen other Fiat cars that he designed that have not quite caught the same iconic image - Topolino, 1100, 600, 850, 126, 127, etc.) to the Italian way of life and not least to the economy of the day.

Dante Giacosa was a modest and unassuming man and intensely interested in the impact of industrial culture upon people and their lives. He has described his working life in: 'Forty Years of Design with Fiat' which was published in 1979. Like some of the cars he developed, his book has become a 'Collector's item' with copies selling second-hand for E500 or more.

Dante Giacosa was born in Rome 3 January 1905 and died in Turin 31 March 1996. Pause for a minute or two to reflect on his legacy when you next see an original Fiat 500 ■



# UK Trip Story - Stonehenge, .....

by Gail Lugten

I am not a scientist, and I can't even pretend to fully understand climate change, but it seems to me that hot climates are becoming more tropical (just look at the rain in this Roman summer), and cold places are becoming warmer. So, I think that the time has come to suggest something you may not ever have considered before: why not have your 2014 summer holiday in England? The reason I suggest 2014 is because you must do the holiday in late June and early July. (I will explain why in just a moment).



I have been to London many times, but I have never been out of London. This year, my husband and I decided to comprehensively tour the English countryside. The result was a magical holiday and I hope to inspire you in this story.

We flew to London on 19 June, hired a car, attached a Tom Tom (which performed brilliantly for the whole trip) and set off for Hastings via the white cliffs of Dover. It was sunny and over 30°. We stayed that night in a B and B which was one of the nicest stays of our trip. We tried to do a wide range of accommodation on our travels: everything from five star luxury to a rustic 16th century Welsh pub. The food we ate was also of a wide variety and included everything from trendy and / or exclusive to take-away. On the whole, the accommodation was above standard, and the food was a bit

disappointing, but we didn't do much pre-trip reading on where to eat, and I am sure that a bit of research effort would pay off handsomely.

The weather on day two was completely different, not raining but it might as well have been. The clouds were so low, we spent most of the day driving through them. When they did lift high enough to get a view, the result was rewarding. This trip was through astonishingly beautiful country sides. Rolling green hills, roads covered in trees like bowers, villages that looked like chocolate boxes with old buildings covered in thatch and cottage summer gardens that were picture perfect. We entered Amesbury (on the Avon River) and were immediately struck by a large number of tourists walking in long robes, hoods, with walking staffs and rainbow-coloured clothes.

Either we were lost in Hobbiton or something was definitely afoot.

Amesbury is the nearest town to Stonehenge and summer solstice is one of only two days in a year that Stonehenge is open to the public, (winter solstice sunset being the other occasion). On these days you can enter the circles and actually touch the stones, and the event attracts the weird, magical and mystical from all over the world. Stonehenge was constructed between 3,000 and 1600 BCE which makes Ancient Rome look modern in comparison. The stones of Stonehenge were shaped and transported from Wales, but we still do not understand why or how. The one thing that is clear is that the monument is aligned with the solstice: mid summer sunrise and the midwinter sunset, and for many people the stones are a place of worship. I wanted to see this magical moment for myself. Watch the sun god penetrate the earth mother and try to feel the spirituality of the occasion.

My husband and I spent the night (well, until 3am) in a four star, beautiful hotel about a 50 minute walk from stonehenge. We left the hotel at 3.30 on midsummer morning and walked along roads that were closed to traffic, and through privately owned cow pastures to arrive at Stonehenge at 4.20 in the morning. (If ever you do this, please take a torch.) Upon arriving at Stonehenge, I was totally unprepared for what I saw. I expected a few hundred worshippers. Instead there were 30,000 people, flood lights, riot police on horse-back, music, food and coffee stalls, and the strong smell of hooch hanging over all the landscape. Now, having said this, I



have not done justice to the event. The fact is that when you left all this crazy stuff behind, and walked toward the stones, there was just an overwhelming spiritual feel to the whole event. Ironically, most of the 30,000 spectators were asleep on their tarpaulins. (They peeked too early, just can't pace themselves like us 50 year olds! ) Those that were awake, and playing their bongo drums, and counting down the I-phone minutes until sunrise at 4.50, were a real delight. As dawn approached, the flood lights were turned off, and the drums became louder. I went to the first ring of stones, and held my hands against it. A young man with a blue plastic bongo, came up behind me and said, "I've got to get in to the middle with my drum!" Well, what else could I do but let him in, as did everyone else. The atmosphere was great fun. I overheard one young man berating his friend because they were supposed to meet up in the corner. The friend replied that he couldn't find the corner. (Corner at Stonehenge, get it?) Everyone around us started to laugh. Another young spiritual looking guy, just fell to his knees in worship. The majority of people were young and partying, there was also a good sprinkling of curious tourists (like me), and

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there were many pilgrims. But, everyone was respectful of each other and the atmosphere was one of immense peace and good will.

So, Did I see the sunrise, when the Sun God penetrates the Earth Mother? No. Of course the legendary English weather let me down for this momentous occasion by being overcast and foggy, and we missed the sunrise entirely. Seriously, it makes me wonder how those druids worked it out so accurately?



Was it a worthwhile trek across the continent and out of bed at 3am and walking uphill for an hour in the dark? Absolutely, it was beautiful and joyous and a really unique, spiritual experience and I loved every minute of it.

I didn't see the visual experience that I was hoping to see, but I did attend an amazing event that I would recommend to all.

After sunrise, there was a mass exodus from the site. Those of us that were still awake left the Stones, treading over the sleeping bodies that resembled a battlefield. Together we trekked back through the fields and paddocks. The British police wished everyone a safe return trip and hoped that they experienced a great solstice. I was back at the hotel and in bed by 6am.

And that is why you should plan your trip for late June and early July, the Stonehenge solstice is a must. But if you want more to entice you, the list goes on and on.

Glastonbury music festival, the Royal Ascot races, Wimbledon, there was even a free concert by the Rolling Stones in Hyde Park, antique fairs, village fetes .... every day was something special. After Stonehenge the weather was great for the rest of my trip.

My personal highlights apart from Stonehenge: travelling by Canal boat down ten locks at Caen Hill; a totally free 2.5 hour walking tour of the beautiful, ancient city of Bath; dinner at Rick Stein's sustainable seafood restaurant in Padstow, Cornwall; lunch in the Eagle and Child pub in Oxford where Tolkien and C.S. Lewis exchanged readings of their manuscripts; trekking in the breathtaking Yorkshire Dales; high tea at the Savoy hotel; leaving a bunch of flowers on the grave of Agatha Christie; and visiting an exclusive antique fare in Chelsea.

This was a magnificent holiday and next summer I will return again to explore the north of England. Perhaps we can meet for scones with jam and cream, (or a pint of bitter with some sharp English cheese) ■

## NEWSLETTER



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# Secrets of Success in China

by Fahmi Bishay

The success of the Chinese economy during the last two decades is remarkable. China is currently the world's second largest economy after the United States. She has been one of the world's fastest-growing economies; with an average GDP growth rate of almost 10% during the past 30 years. Though recently growth rates have declined, they remained quite high: in 2012 the country's GDP rate of growth was about 8.5 % and in 2013 it is forecasted to be about 7.5%. China is also the second largest trading nation in the world; the largest exporter and second largest importer of goods. One of the country's great secrets for this success is the extremely high value of labour in China. Another secret is the country's seriousness in carrying out its scientific and technological tasks. And a third secret is launching a country campaign around a national theme and realizing it. The author of this article presents a number of personal encounters in China to highlight some of the country's secrets of success.



Figure 1. The author trying hard work in China.

## *The Value of labour*

“Would you like a cup of green tea Sir?” asked the Chinese young

lady. “Yes, it is cold Miss, and I would be grateful for a cup of hot Chinese tea” the author of this article replied. In a few minutes, she brought him a great cup of hot green tea in a beautiful Chinese cup with a built-in cover to keep it hot. He thanked her so much, and as he was drinking his tea, he looked around in the University theatre where he would deliver his invited lectures over a one- week course. The lectures were on **“agricultural policy analysis and structural adjustment programs”**. Those lectures were part of an elaborate on-the-job training course for a number of senior Chinese Government officials.

In the classroom, and prior to delivering his lectures, the author found a group of middle- aged Chinese men and women working very hard on sweeping the floor, cleaning the large glass windows, preparing the hot tea while all of them having a most beautiful smile



Figure 2. Part of the (50 000 km) Great Wall of China



Figure 3. The author delivering his lectures in China

on their faces. He appreciated those highly dedicated “workers” who came so early to prepare the theater for the lectures.

Upon completion of their work, when the class room became spotlessly clean, those most pleasant workers left. Shortly after, the author was most surprised to find out that the same “workers” have just changed into more formal and elegant clothes and returned to attend his lectures: **They** were his audience. They valued and were

proud of their own hard work. The author did highly appreciate the value of labor performed by those senior Government officials. In his mind, he appreciated that the Chinese society’s appreciation of **the value of labor is one of China’s secrets for her success.**

Another example of how much we should admire and appreciate the value of Chinese labor is the **marvelous Great Wall of China.**

### ***The Great Wall of China: A triumph of hard work***

When Neil Armstrong, the American astronaut, landed on the moon in 1969, and looked down on the Planet Earth, the only **man-made** object that he could see from the moon was the **Great Wall of China.** This is hardly surprising when we appreciate how long the wall is: It is about **50 000** (yes, fifty thousands, no typos) **Kilometers** long. It took enormous labor force, very hard work and a very long time to build. It took **tens of millions** of people to build the wall over



a period of over **2000 years**; extending from the **Seventh century B.C. to the Seventeenth century** when the Ming Dynasty declined. The Great Wall was built primarily as a defence structure. It is figured out that if the earth, stones, and bricks making up the Great Wall were used to erect a smaller wall: one meter thick and five meters high, that wall could easily circle the earth. And if the same materials were used to build a road: five meters wide and 35 cm deep, that road could circle the earth four times. Yes, the Great Wall of China is indeed a **triumphant achievement of Chinese hard work**<sup>1</sup>.

### **Science and Technology**

During another more recent visit to China, the author of this article said: “Madam, the Chinese language must be very sophisticated and quite elaborate; I love it. In my lecture, I only say a few sentences at a time, covering one thought, in English, and you spend almost five minutes interpreting those few sentences to our audience. Yes, I am most impressed with your highly developed, musical and elaborate language. I am most indebted to you Madam”.

“Thank you very much Sir for your kind remarks and for your appreciation of my mother tongue: the Chinese language”, said the interpreter; who was a beautiful Chinese young lady. She added: “However, the reason for my “longer”, than expected, interpretations Sir is not the sophistication of our language. The main reason is that your lectures on **“agricultural policy and the transition from a centrally planned to a market-oriented economy: Lessons of experience”** focus on agricultural policy analysis; and are based on rigorous economic theories from the West as well as on your own economic policy experience in many developed and developing

---

1) In a future article in the Casa Gazette, the author hopes to have the opportunity to present a paper on the following subject: “The Great Wall of China: History, Structure and Status”.

countries. And your audience (who were senior Chinese Government officials) is not familiar with most of those theories". She continued, "And since I am an Economist (holding a Ph.D. degree in Economics from Georgetown University in the USA) and I am currently a Professor of Economics at Beijing University, I was explaining those theories you have been presenting. In other words, I was delivering a "**parallel lecture.**"

The author was highly impressed by the **seriousness** of the Chinese approach in emphasizing intellectual and professional fields in **science (know why) and technology (know how)**. He reflected in his mind thinking: The Chinese Government has invited me as a Professor in Economics to deliver a number of lectures in Economic Policy Analysis to those senior Government officials as a major component of their on-the-job training in the field of agricultural policy and economic development. This is an advanced and an important subject for China as an "**emerging country**" that is moving from a centrally planned to a more market-oriented economy. Thus, in order **not** to miss any element from those, deemed important and scientific lectures, they called upon a **University Professor** to carry out the **simultaneous interpretation**. Such **seriousness and thoughtful approach**, thought the author, is indeed another secret for **China's outstanding success**.

The author next asked the Professor interpreter: Whether she believed that the audience has understood the lecture? She replied; "I hope so". She added, "Your lecture was understandable to me; but I believe it was difficult for your audience. However, with my further explanation, I hope they got it". The author then said: "How about if in our next session I would ask a number of questions related to my lecture, and let us see: how much they have understood? He added, "And please

Madam, translate literally their answers without any addition and/or modification.” And she said: “Yes, of course Sir”.

In the next session the author asked a number of substantive and thought provoking questions related to his earlier lecture. And the answers were very satisfactory indeed with well reasoned and relevant examples from the Chinese economy. He concluded that the Chinese secret for success of adopting a ***seriousness and thoughtful approach for scientific and technological subjects*** has indeed worked. *The author was thus pleased, and so was the interpreter as well as the audience.*

### ***The Chinese Dream***

Another secret for the success of China is launching a country campaign to adopt and implement an inspiring idea or a philosophy where the above secrets are carefully integrated. To this end, the Chinese like to adopt certain ***mottos*** or ***slogans*** that motivate the population and highlight, in a very short and memorable “phrase”, a philosophical wisdom that guides the people at a certain era in the country’s evolution. The current motto is the realization of the ***“Chinese Dream”***. The Chinese society is now working on the identification and formulation of means for the realization of the Chinese Dream. Thus, schools, all over the country, have been organizing “Chinese dream” speaking competitions. Government officials and academics are preparing perceptions and proposals on the “Chinese Dream”. Academic and professional societies are holding seminars and workshops on the “Chinese Dream”. In a nutshell: the Chinese Dream is generally perceived as the ***“revival of China”***. And appreciating the above-mentioned secrets of China’s success, the author is most confident that ***China will succeed in realizing her dream in the not too distant future*** ■

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# COPERTURA MEDICA PER CHI NON HA O HA PERSO IL DIRITTO ALLA VAN BREDA

*di Francesco Di Pancrazio e Giorgio Marraffa*

Queste poche righe sono rivolte a quei colleghi che ancora non conoscono il G.A.D.O.I..

Il G.A.D.O.I. ( Gruppo Associativo Dipendenti Organizzazioni Internazionali), è nato nel 1996 con lo scopo di ridare la copertura medica ai figli dei dipendenti della FAO, WFP e IFAD, che avendo raggiunto l'età di 26 anni perdono il diritto all'assistenza medica della Van Breda.

Nella ricerca di una soluzione adeguata e soddisfacente per i nostri figli , abbiamo analizzato attentamente le proposte di contratto presentateci dalle più importanti Compagnie di Assicurazione operanti sulla piazza di Roma. Tra queste c'era la Compagnia di Assicurazioni SAI (oggi Fondiaria-SAI), che ci ha proposto un Contratto di Gruppo, valido in tutto il mondo, a condizioni particolarmente agevolate, e abbastanza simile a quello della Van Breda.

Abbiamo quindi dato vita a questa nostra Associazione, che è privata e del tutto indipendente da qualsiasi Organo Ufficiale della FAO, registrandone lo Statuto presso un Notaio di Roma e ottenendo quindi il riconoscimento ufficiale sul territorio nazionale e all'Estero.

Nello Statuto è precisato che il G.A.D.O.I. è un'Associazione senza fini di lucro e senza capitali ed opera nel campo assicurativo con lo scopo di ottenere dalle Compagnie Assicuratrici dei contratti vantaggiosi per i propri associati.

Dopo aver formato il Gruppo e creata l'Associazione, abbiamo stipulato una Convenzione con la SAI, che ci ha dato la possibilità di inserire nella Polizza di Gruppo anche familiari e conviventi. Inoltre ci ha proposto di stipulare qualsiasi altro tipo di contratto, sempre a condizioni vantaggiose; finora oltre all'Assicurazione Medica abbiamo stipulato delle Polizze a Capitalizzazione (Pensione Integrativa) ed abbiamo intenzione di allargare ancora il campo delle nostre attività.

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Giorgio Marraffa, un collega pensionato che ha contribuito a fondare l' Associazione, gestisce questa attività fin dall'inizio ed è disponibile a fornire qualsiasi informazione sul contratto, chiamandolo allo 06 87182390 oppure al 360 428414; per parlargli di persona conviene invece chiamare la FAO Staff Coop, ext. 53142 e chiedere un appuntamento ■

## Roast Veal with prunes and orange juice

### Ingredients:

- 1,400 kg roasting veal (girello)
- 1 glass of unsweetened orange juice
- 300 gr dried prunes
- extra virgin olive oil
- sprigs fresh rosemary
- 3 cloves garlic
- salt, black pepper



### Method:

Soak the dried prunes in the orange juice - set aside until ready to use. Season the roast with salt and pepper – with a sharp knife make several gashes in meat and insert pieces of garlic and rosemary leaves. Arrange the roast in a large deep dish or pyrex distributing sprigs of rosemary and pieces of garlic underneath and on top, pour olive oil over the roast, ensuring that oil goes under the meat also – cover loosely with a sheet of aluminium foil. Place in a pre-heated oven at 180°C (if electric) or equivalent in gas oven. Cook for 40 minutes covered, remove from oven, remove foil – distribute the prunes around the roast and pour over the orange juice. Return to the hot oven and continue baking for 40 minutes or more to finish cooking the meat turning once or twice - allowing to get slightly brown.

When cooked slice thinly the roast and arrange in the centre of an oval or rectangular serving dish with the prunes around it. Pour over the orange juice and cooking juices from the oven dish – can be thickened over a low fire adding some cornflour diluted in water. Serve with baked potatoes, puree or mixed vegetables cooked in oven or in frying pan. See following recipe.

## Mixed Vegetables in oven

### Ingredients:

2 large long aubergines  
3 medium zucchini /courgettes)  
3-4 ripe fresh plum tomatoes  
1 yellow and 1 red sweet pepper  
1-2 potatoes – peeled and cubed  
salt, black pepper  
olive oil  
2-3 cloves garlic chopped  
1 large red or white onion chopped  
2 branches fresh basil  
100 gr black olives pitted - optional  
chopped parsley



### Method:

Wash aubergines and zucchini and cut in four lengthwise, then cut up into cubes of 2 cm. Wash peppers and tomatoes and cut up into similar cubes as zucchini. Place all the vegetables, onion, garlic, olives and potatoes on a large baking tray or oven dish, season with salt and pepper and add abundant basil leaves. Season with salt and black pepper and abundant olive oil, mixing well to season uniformly. Cook in a preheated hot oven for an hour – turning over vegetables 3 or 4 times. A little water can be added if vegetables dry up or begin sticking to pan. Verify salt adding some if needed.

Turn out cooked vegetables on a serving dish and sprinkle over it the chopped parsley turning once to amalgamate. Great accompanied with a hot pepper sauce to perk up flavour and to accompany with chapati or pita bread.

These vegetables can be cooked over a moderate gas fire in a heavy bottomed casserole or ceramic coated pan, abundant olive oil, and turning frequently to avoid burning. Canned plum tomatoes can be used in the absence of fresh tomatoes.

Serve with roast veal, chicken or pork and bread.



Monumental Fountain, Villa D'Este (Tivoli)