

GEOGRAPHY AS PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT
EDUCATION
some reflections on the book by
Giuliana Matirani

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July 1984

The book by Giuliana Martirani, La Geografia come educazione allo sviluppo e alla pace is probably one that is going to be imitated by many authors around the world. The concept is audacious and is put into practice on about three hundred pages in a very imaginative manner. And the concept is as follows: take three relatively ambitious and holistic approaches to the human condition: geography, development and peace, and try to give as much information about them in their relationship to each other as possible!

Of course, the book contains no theory. From an academic point of view this will not make the book rank high as purely intellectual achievement. But as pedagogical achievement it is almost without equal, with the possible exception of some of the highly imaginative atlases presenting history, raw material geography and any aspect related to militarism in very imaginative manners. And in terms of facts and very concrete knowledge I wonder how many who would read this book and find it insufficiently theoretical on proper examination would have the faintest idea about as much as one tenth of the material presented in the book! Of course, after Gutenberg's innovation more than five hundred years ago it is no longer a sign of being a true intellectual that one knows things by heart: a good intellectual knows where to find the facts but burdens his memory with something else, thought-systems linking facts together, understanding them, explaining them. But the point is whether the reader knows that this type of facts existed at all, or whether with the hand on the heart, he would be willing to admit that he knows considerably more - using Giuliana Martirani as a guide -

than most people would ever have imagined.

Apart from the appendix which is organized in a relatively conventional matter and also gives a lot of information what is new about the book is the systematic use of a very simple typographical technique: the difference between the page to the left and the page to the right. Of course, when one opens the book they are always related to each other. The right hand page is conventional in a sense that there is a line of reasoning, a systematic presentation of the themes covered by the book: development in the first part, education in the second part, geography as development education in the third part and innovative didactics in connection with development and peace in the fourth part.

Then, the left hand page gives an enormous amount of material, from tables, charts, theoretical concepts relating to each other to poetry quotations from more or less famous prophets throughout the ages, and what not. When I read the book I found it very useful to read the lefthand page with the left eye and the right page with the right eye, in a sort of parallel fashion. This would have been impossible in an ordinary book, it makes sense in this one, just try! And I felt considerably more educated when I had come to the end. In fact, two parallel books in one.

This does not mean that the book is perfect. I have one objection of a general nature; I wish the author sometimes had been slightly more sceptical of the concrete information. Organizations are sometimes reported as if they are really doing what they claim they do. The reader has to find out, for him/herself. Given Martirani's book s/he knows a lot about where to look.