**The International Drug Market**

*Saturday 25 October - 3.00 - 6.00 pm, at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni – Sala Cinema, Via Milano 9 A*

The meeting concerned international drug traffic routes and the evolution of the related market, in light of the effects of globalisation and the delocalisation of production.

**Vincenzo Rosario Spagnolo**, writer and journalist at “Avvenire,” introduced the round table to a broad overview of the issue through ten key notions: drug traffic, market, spider web, pyramid, cartels and cartelitos, raspachìn, mulas, pharaohs, money laundering, war.

Spagnolo describes the drug trafficking industry as a pyramid. It stands on a broad base, which is divided into two halves. The first consists of the labour: farmers, chemists, armed guards that grow, collect (the raspachìns), refine and protect coca leaves or opium poppies, or the chemists manufacturing synthetic drugs. The other half of the base consists of the carriers, also called "mulas" in Latin America. The centre of the pyramid is occupied by dealers: carriers, brokers, and corrupt officials. At the apex of the pyramid are the "pharaohs," or the bosses of transnational drug companies. Drug trafficking costs an estimated yearly average of 300 million Euros per year. We have paid a high price for this market boom in terms of crime, environmental pollution, corruption, money laundering, and terrorism (slaughters, coups).

**Franz Trautmann**, from the Trimbos Instituut of Utrecht, recognised, through his speech, the new trends in the drug market and routes. On the other hand, Trautmann explains, we observe an increase in synthetic drugs (amphetamines) with respect to "natural" drugs (cannabis, cocaine, and heroin). This is mainly due to the easy of producing synthetic drugs. Opening a lab is easier than growing huge plots of psychotropic plants. Labs can be hidden in a building, which makes it more difficult for the police to investigate. Moreover, synthetic drug production better fits delocalisation and reduces the distance between production and consumption areas, thus eliminating transport costs and reducing the risk of interception by the Police during transport. Lastly, synthetic drugs fit better in the lifestyle of certain young people: they are consumed at rave parties, and are associated with a certain kind of music.

The escalation of synthetic drugs has led to the emergence of new producing countries in places such as Eastern Europe and Russia, for example, with a climate that excludes the practice of growing coke or cannabis.

The Northern European trade route has almost been abandoned, to the advantage of routes crossing Africa (Liberia, for example, is now a crossroad for drug traffickers).

Trautmann finally stressed the impact of public policies by stating that prohibitionist approaches boost drug production and consumption and are at the base of the illegal trafficking of drugs.

**Franco Maisto**, President of the Surveillance Court of Emilia Romagna, based his speech on investigations by the Police. He highlighted the features of illegal drug traffic: dynamics (traffic diversification), competitiveness, innovation (use of the Internet, creation of new synthetic drugs), overcoming of national language and ethnic barriers, gathering of more organised crime groups sharing a same goal, and diversification of the routes. Then, he explained the differences in the production and dealing of cocaine, heroin, cannabis, and synthetic drugs (ATS). With specific regard to the traffic of cocaine, Franco Maisto stressed the increasing influence by organised crime groups (the Ndrangheta, in this case) on this market, also due to corruption.

**Salvatore Veltri**, SOT manager at the Customs Office, Caselle airport of Turin, introduced the intelligence and investigation activity performed by the Customs and Monopoly Office to monitor the people and goods that reach Italy through ports, airports and terrestrial borders. During the last few years, the Agency has also been performing non-tax-related activities, such as the control and management of "suspect" goods. Talking about the techniques used by the Office to intercept loads from these areas (the Gioia Tauro port hosts some 3.2 million containers every year), Salvatore Veltri described the inspections of containers and the scanners used.

Finally, **Stefano Fumarulo**, consultant to the AntiMafia Parliamentary Committee and representative for Mexico at Libera International, stressed the tragic situation of Mexico, pointing to the country as one of the main examples of the failure in the fight against drug trafficking. The so-called "war on drug trafficking" conducted by several Presidents who ruled the country has actually intensified the clashes among cartels and criminal groups. This resulted in the death of tens of thousands of people and the establishment of an endemic form of corruption that penetrates the very core of every institution.

Fumarulo then described the campaign launched last year by Libera, "Peace for Mexico. Mexico for Peace," conceived to raise awareness in Italy and Europe about the tragic lack of legality and rule of law that plagues Mexico. With regard to the victims, he recalled the kidnapping of 43 students, "desaparecidos" from the University for rural teachers of Ayotzinapa, in the Guerrero State. On 26 September 2014, the students were kidnapped by the police of the city of Iguala in collusion with the "Guerreros Unidos," an armed wing linked with the "Beltran Leyva" drug trafficking cartel. Their fate remains unknown.