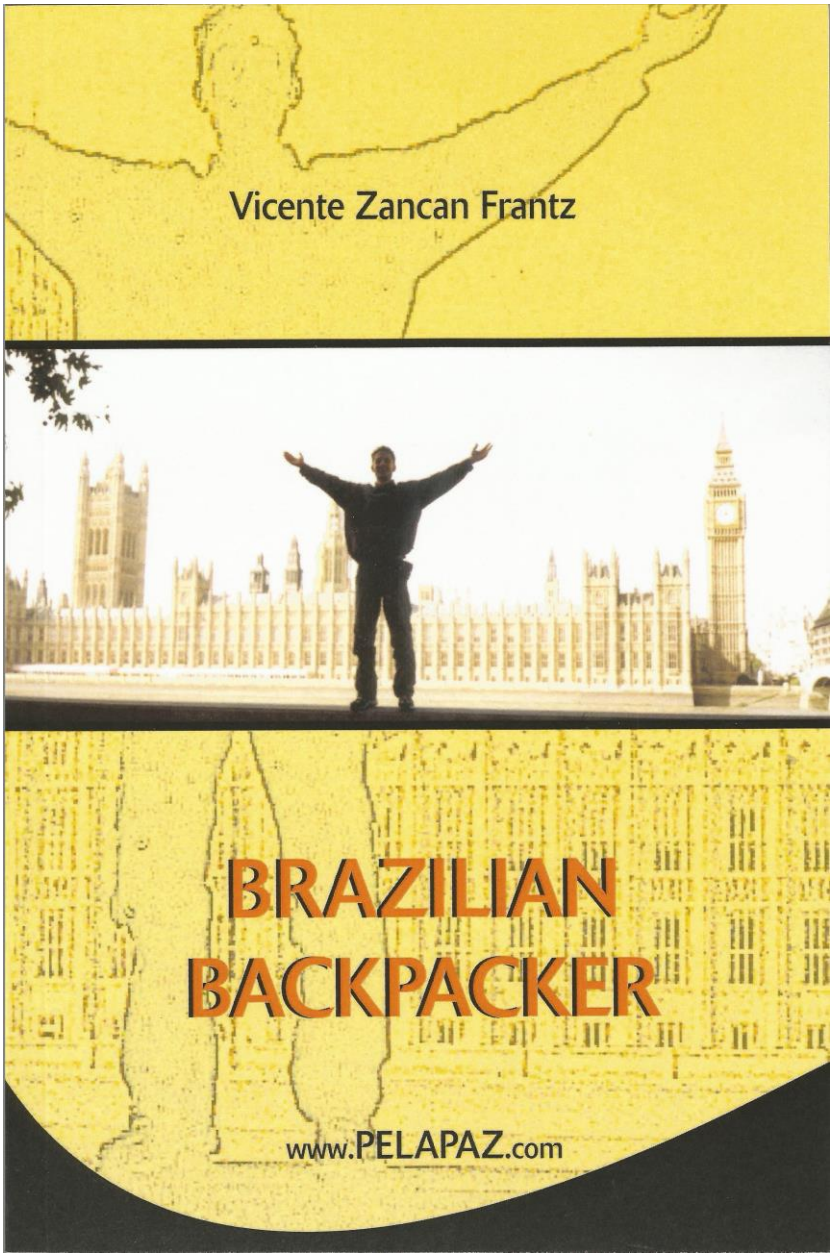
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*This writing is **in honor to all those who adventure themselves***
in the pursuit of a better life, in making their dreams come true
or even for fun.

*In the same way, I dedicate this book **to my family and to my friends**, since they are the base and the support*
of each one of my steps.

***To all my teachers**, especially those of Portuguese and English, the gratitude from this eternal learner.*

*I also want to dedicate this piece of work **to the new generations** – as an example to Julia, my Goddaughter,*
who is learning her first steps at present –, with the wish that they learn to speak, to listen, to run around
the world and to share.

"Traveling is a way to get to know the world,
life, other people and yourself better.
It's a funny, fast and effective way
to improve the world, because the learner traveler
returns with new ideas and energy
to the place from where he started.
Set your feet and mind on the road!"

Vicente Zancan Frantz

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WHEN YOU KNOW THE MOMENT...

* Who amongst us wouldn't like to travel, freely around the world, making the most of its beauties, enjoying its surprises, facing its challenges, and also, add up situations, share experiences, touch what was just imagined before...?

* How many of us have spent life dreaming of taking THAT trip, always postponed, until the moment when, at last, we do not have physical, material, psychological conditions to do it anymore...

* How many times we let the train of history pass by for not knowing how to spot, at the right moment, the only opportunity that was waving at us...

* How many times don´t we keep waiting for others to take the initiative for us, to take all the measures and to present us with things which are ready...

* How many times don´t we end up leaving our projects behind, not living new experiences, because we believe we do not have the ideal conditions...

* How many of us give up our dreams because we don´t believe in them enough, or because we don´t have the guts to make them come true...

* How many times do we get unmotivated at the first difficulty and use this as an excuse to be accommodated in our comfort zone...

* How many times the fear of the unknown was greater than the wish to face it...

Thinking of all these, we give a round of applause to what Vicente did, since he believed in and was able to accomplish his project, for long dreamed of and firmly planned in every single detail. The obstacles were being overcome one by one. The fears courageously released. And the dreams persistently came true.

We know it was an enriching experience, not only with happy moments. For an experience like this one to take place utterly, it was necessary to be with open arms and heart, willing to face all the challenges, accepting conditions never thought of before.

The important thing was to always believe, never giving in when facing difficulties, and to endeavor all the possible efforts for succeeding in his project.

The trip represented, at the same time, a dive within himself and out of himself, initiating, as a rite of passage, a new time of his life.

Not only did he learn a lot with this experience, but all of us learnt a lot with him. For the family, it was thrilling to follow his efforts, his determination, and his courage to carry out this well succeeded "adventure".

Now, he wants more. He wants to share with his friends and all those who care about him a little of the emotions and the pleasure he had. A lonely traveler, he did not have anyone to talk to about his impressions and emotions. And we all know that when we go through something very good and thrilling, it does not fit into just one heart. We need to lend these emotions to other hearts and leave a little bit of what we felt inside each one of them. Therefore, in this register, the young author does what we wished to do throughout his trip: he shares joys as well as emotions and tells, as to a bunch of friends, the most interesting things about this great adventure, encouraging others to also have their own.

Maria Helena Zancan Frantz

FIRST WORDS

The aim at organizing this book is **to share a life experience**. If you, reader, reflect and have fun with this reading, I will be pleased. The expectation is to instigate the **creation of similar opportunities to all those who are interested** in situations of the same kind, as well as to make each and every reader to enjoy some part of this great and thrilling adventure. The intention never was to describe in detail each place visited, since this information are to be appropriately found in guide books.

We were taught that a writer rarely creates. He usually captures information and conveys it to society, introducing such ideas in a different way, intending to convey messages till then not captured in the afore proposed ways. In this sense, the originality of the author is necessary, that is connected to his sensitivity, observation and reflection. This determines his creation, which, in the end, makes his success possible (or not). Perhaps, something similar should be recommended to the reader. So, please, so as to perfume these simple writings, give wings to your imagination!

I have always dreamed of having experiences of this kind. I believe there are opportunities for all, nevertheless with different easiness or difficulties for each one. Due to cultural, financial, physical, educational background, personality differences etc., everyone has individual reasons and explanations for having different attitudes facing ordinary facts that challenge us every day.

I have always dreamed of traveling. I used to imagine there would not be a greater joy and fulfillment than knowing as much as possible of the so many beauties as of this wide world. Some feeling that life is short, heaven is a promise, and thus, knowing and savoring the infinite God feats throughout this planet would be heaven itself.

Hence, I waited for the opportunity to come, also helping to create it, I ventured myself at the moment I believed to be the right one. We know

that **the human being was made to live close to those he/she loves**. Therefore, I never intended to travel all by myself. As I did not find any known companion to share the emotions of a great adventure, I had to leave unaccompanied.

It is true though that in London I met some Brazilian friends I had known in Brazil. But, because of different itineraries, unfortunately none of them was a constant company. For this reason, I soon looked for alternatives so that the so feared lowliness would not knock me down.

Firstly, I had the full support of my family. Acknowledging the importance of such an experience, my parents have always provided all the support possible. Likewise, I have got motivated by my friends. Everybody has contributed for me, even though alone, not to feel lonely. An example of that were the countless comments posted in a blog, created during the trip, as well as the e-mails constantly exchanged. Surely, considering the long distance and the endless difficulties, I missed every one so much. However, the terror of solitude has never got to an unbearable point.

The positive aspect of it was that, without having someone to talk to as much, I've ended up writing some thoughts so as to have the impression that I was somehow communicating. And that is how these writings came about.

In order to facilitate trips overseas, it is essential to travel around with **legal age of majority**. In relation to my life in Brazil, I've always known I belong to a privileged minority. Moreover, having had conditions of living well and close to my family and friends, I would never have found a better place to spend most of my days. That's why, since the beginning, the intention was solely to spy through the lock of the Planet, briefly experimenting what's different. The way back home should've been as fast as possible. Actually, I've imagined the length of the journey would be enough to reach my goals, not mattering much how many times the *Big Ben* would go round during this break of life's duties.

Knowing the **English language** has been consolidated as the most efficient communication method when one aims at going beyond the borders of his own country. Thus, before traveling I have taken English classes for 5 years, studying as much as my patience allowed me. Even so, as soon as I got there, I faced the accent of a British officer, less kind than a watch dog; I immediately started missing my English much more!

When I turned 18, and I noticed that I could already articulate basic phrases in English, I felt that the time to venture myself was coming. As I was born in 1983, I got to age of majority in 2001. In the same year, I had entered university to take Law. I got to the conclusion the best moment to travel (for a long time) would be the **middle of the graduate course**, as I would've already been familiarized with my future professional area, being able to observe it in other countries as well. Still, after the necessary leave to travel, I would have a reasonable time to recover the "forgotten" content, avoiding greater deficits until the graduation ceremony (and the professional opportunities that come with it...). And the doors would be open to future experiences after college.

The initial destination of the trip was **London**, capital of England. I've chosen this metropolis considering especially the vast culture that I'd find there. We know London is a cosmopolitan city, where we find mostly all the nations of this Planet. Moreover, its official local language is English (the one I wanted to learn). As if it weren't enough, the British currency is the English Pound, the strongest among the greatest economies, what would enable me to work and save the necessary money to travel to other places as well. Mainly across the European continent, the only one that, until the moment, facilitates a lot the lives of those who want to know its **several countries**. All in all, the vast culture, the English practice and the power of the currency have determined my choice.

And that was it. I've taken 5 semesters of university, required a leave of my course and started the so awaited trip. After enrolling in a school on the internet, I got to London. I was very nervous about the famous rejection to the entrance of foreigners into the European Union in British soil.

Notwithstanding this fact, in case I didn't get the visa to enter in that country, Australia or New Zealand had already been chosen as alternatives to the initial idea.

The state of mind that dominated me as soon as I got to London might be understood through a simple poem that I wrote:

Literal Landscape, Portraying a Thought

These days
I live dreams
Which require
Other days.

The world that here I find
There I would never find
Experiences without words
Depression and euphoria.

A lot in life has its time
I believe now is the time
To know and to find out
The "other time" would be never.

I feel it, I miss it so much
But the dream is even greater
If any day I regret it
It will not be for having sought the best.

Differences, new and old.
Qualities and flaws
Another planet, other ideas
Values and prejudice are washed away.

My life maze is bigger
Strange ways I had never considered
This finite experience is fascinating
Towards the way out, here I shall pass.

Not all, I know, are flowers
More loved ones, fewer thorns
It's the ambition that causes pain
But energizes my way.

I wanted to be able to enjoy it all
To have the world in my hand
Happy with what I already have
It would be the exact perfection.

Who left will never be back
Having a less narrow mind
Far beyond left or right
With new wings the world will fly.

I move on realizing
There are more dreams and ambitions
I never want to settle down
In challenges, find solutions.

May this be the first one
Of these wanderings and realizations
Broken and (re)created laws
They are ideals that move lungs.

Hard, but not impossible
Discovering that I know nothing
In the game of life, I will make the dreams come true
And, citizen of the world, I will pursue.

Furthermore, roughly speaking, the will to travel has beaten my **fears** and increased my courage whereas I've overcome the limitations, and have pursued my dreams. Naturally, as time went by, I noticed my fears had actually been substituted, the limitations altered, my dreams partly modified and the courage redirected...

At last, as it was expected, I feel I've had a great adventure, part of which I'm reckoning only now. Nothing abnormal, since we know human beings take long to digest the information they acquire, isn't it so? Besides that, the time I spent traveling wasn't that short. Even though it's been mere 16 months of a life that belongs to a generation whose life expectancy already estimated at more than 130 years (optimistic prediction, I know. Laughter...), **what matters is not the time spent traveling, but the way the trip was enjoyed**. The thrilling accomplishments and the fascinating experiences of this 1 year and 4 months "drifting" abroad (the opposition

would claim!) have certainly made other decades of my life special, since I'm always reflecting, enjoying and learning from the knowledge acquired at this time.

As a matter of fact, the number of strikes of a clock during any adventure is one of the most relative things, because it depends on one's commitment and capacities, which are very variable factors. A proof of that is that there are people who have always lived in the same place and who don't know it well, while there are others who, in a few weeks, already know a whole region pretty well. Not to mention those who live abroad, learn to have a critical and curious view, and soon after they go back to their hometowns and live there as tourists and qualified learners, and just then they get to know it well.

It's obvious that the dream of going round the world hasn't been totally fulfilled (and I suspect it will never be!). Quite on the contrary, I hope several other adventurous opportunities are yet to come. Even if time doesn't stop, responsibilities increase and age limitations become inevitable, I believe **planning**, **creativity and improvisation** may overcome the variable obstacles of each one of the years to come.

Closely knowing the oriental culture, the African continent and all Latin America are future destinations to be pursued. Even more difficult, but not impossible, is the dream of traveling the seven seas by boat, anchoring for a while in Oceania. And there we go, since, at least we don´t pay any taxes for dreaming in Brazil!

It's always fun to enjoy the **touristic attractions** of each place, getting to know the good things that are displayed to travelers. But we mustn't please ourselves with so little. Comparing the peculiarities of each people, of each mind, of each idea, as well as exhaustively reflecting so as to contribute for the construction of a better world is a duty of ach one of us, citizens of the world. Although everybody should have the right to travel to and to know places, unfortunately, just a few have the opportunity to unfold the realities that, sometimes, only books bring to us. And none of the gifted ones with such a privilege has the right of offloading their responsibility of

sharing these experiences. That's another reason why I write this report.

As for the authorship of these writings, there's something interesting to be clarified from a psychological point of view. My name is Vicente and my nickname is Tião. Observing the occasions in which one or another was used, I started distinguishing them. Soon I captured the inner characteristics of each one, defining them more or less with two personalities belonging to the same person. It doesn't mean it's a bipolar disorder; rather, it's a mere division and classification of behaviors of the same being. I believe you must have a nickname, also sharing their attitudes. So here goes the suggestion for us to get to know each other better, alright? That's why in February 2004, inspired by the Carnival atmosphere, I jotted down the following lines.

Tião Vicente

Tião Titó of the Rum Distillery
Right away I introduce myself
The origin and the name itself
Come from friends, without prejudice.

I have my own personality
However, I share with another the body
I celebrate the mundane beauties
Smiling, singing, living, dizzy.

Adolescence, eternally
In many aspects I oppose to the other
We criticize each other, book and bottle
I will always be young, emotional and hasty.

Fortunately, we complement each other
As he takes responsibility of our deeds
Although to the world we are just one
We have two personalities, more than rare.

He is mature and rational
I will always be an adolescent
I am abrupt and impulsive
Filled up with Brazilian rum.

When he is tired
I enter the scene
I always call him after I make some trouble
And his prestige is my salvation.

He is the head, I am the heart
One is the refuge and the escape of the other
From stress he runs away not to go insane
Adventurer, I look for emotion.

I don't walk around with bad company
I hardly follow those I walk with
Barbecue, cards, booze and party
From time to time, a soccer match when I am drunk.

I am always by the bar
Essential is the booze, after the girls
"I only drink because it is liquid
If it were solid, I'd eat it."

After all, of the road, he is the way
Alcohol of wine, I'm the wrong way
He says: "My name is Vicente Z. F."
And I, "Around here, people call me Tião…"

As for the structure and the **organization of this book**, I adopted a chronological order. Initially, WHEN YOU KNOW THE MOMENT... is a doting and affectionate introduction made by mother. Next, FIRST WORDS must locate the reader in relation to the reasons not only for these trips but also for these writings. After that, the report of the impressions of the EIGHT FIRST MONTHS AWAY FROM HOME was written about 6 months after my return to Brazil. In the first 180 days of my return to the green and yellow country, I tried to go on **living as a tourist** (visiting, observing, enjoying, comparing, registering), even considering them as a continuation of the 16 months being abroad. Finally, VIRTUAL SCRIBBLES ON THE BLOG describes the following months and are based on the referred virtual site written while I was still traveling.

These four parts of the book were decorated with ph**otos**, qualifying and complementing the messages of the text. **Key-words were highlighted**, facilitating the reader's life who, besides having fun throughout the report, wants to find some **tips**, references of the **cities, countries, or suggestions** of reflection. To make your reading even richer and more fun, **get informed on the internet** about the places, things and facts that were mentioned here. If your search is successful, you'll take a ride with me on this trip!

Out of curiosity, more than 1500 of the taken photos were printed and only some remained digital. As I was alone most of the time, I've asked strangers to do the favor of taking pictures with my camera many times. Who should I entitle such task? The choice was simple: either I asked someone with the looks of a good photographer, or I'd take the risk of handing the camera to a "chubby" person who could be easily reached in case of a chase to recover it... Hahaha...

I don't know precisely what to call this material. It's not exactly a diary. To call it "writings about the day by day in which the routine is constant changes" would also be complicated. **It's essentially writings about a search for peace, inner as well as exterior.** Thus, traveling to find peace, I think the naming "writing travel thoughts of peace" would be truthful and meaningful. However, as it's too long, it'd be inconvenient. So, thinking of a simpler and more attractive title, although not as rich as the aforementioned option, I've created the current "**Mochileiro Aprendiz Aventureiro – Adventurer Learner Backpacker**", meaning the manner, the goal and the spirit of the trip. It's a summary of the method that I believe to be the most accessible, enjoyable and interesting one to know the world. What did you think of it? You will notice that the whole book is a **tip** for people to travel like that.

I've thought about the writing style used in this piece of writing. I've decided to use commas as little as possible in order to try to provide a light, extroverted and informal way. We aim at making this report a pleasant chat, as well as a way not to twist the tongue and to facilitate the functioning of

the reader´s lungs. This writing was perfumed with poems as well as with an artistic perspective to see the world, life, other backpackers and myself.

Well then. An even bigger dream is that other conclusions, reflections, assumptions and learning moments that rise from this great journey be shared in other novels. All this hoping that this report gets to be light and fun. So, with no further ado, I wish each and every reader make the most of and have lots of fun with this fascinating adventure — at least to the one who´s writing to you! lol...

THE EIGHT FIRST MONTHS AWAY FROM HOME

When I arrived in **LONDON**, the capital of England, on 23rd September 2003, I lived in a **Brazilians' home**. There were 2 rooms and a living room, in which 17 people lived. The house was located in southern London ("the least rich" area, since the north of this British megacity was even better structured), at 559-A Garratt Lane. There was no room for everyone to sit down or to sleep at the same time. We had to improvise. Two of these people I had already met: Jerônimo B. Pinto and Bianca Botteselle. Both Brazilian, *gauchos* (in this case, people from Rio Grande do Sul – Brazil), friends I had made in Ijuí, where the three of us lived during many years, and where I am "still" living. The others were acquaintances of one, who had met the other and so on and so forth, all helping each other in the experience of living away from home. On the first day out with this fine group of friends, I was guided to the main touristic attractions of the city. Of course that the English Parliament was among them:

I have made other good friends. This house was fun and it will be unforgettable. But, unfortunately, after I moved from that typical hostel, I could not keep in touch with all the friends who used to live there. They were college students here in Brazil, so some of them came back to pursue their studies. Others traveled to different places, trying to unveil a little more the mysteries of human life, on such an enigmatic planet.

And this is the life of the great majority of Brazilian students **abroad**: work hard, live as if you were camping for a few months, improvise, study the foreign language, miss your loved ones, meet different people and know different places. It is paramount to have an adventurous spirit, an open mind to new ideas, new thoughts, new attitudes and behaviors, new personalities, and new ways of interpreting life, age, friendship, family, work, the government, society etc.

The good travelers are the ones who use new information available to them to reflect about the world, the others, life and themselves. They constantly search for an improvement of our way of life, in a less ignorant way, so as to find happiness. They end up believing that, if each person had the opportunity to travel enough, the world would be a better place for everybody. As when we travel, we learn to be thoughtful of others, to share and we fight for the end of frontiers. We search for knowledge in a more relaxed way. **The good travelers are good learners**. We do much more than going around: we read the world. We realize that **reading, writing and traveling are just one thing**. **To read is to travel around the world, to travel is to read the Planet and to write is to share all of the above.**

Well, on the **first days** I was there, I was literally scared. Almost everything was different from here. Things were not exactly as I had read about or had heard of. Although the will to make things work out was huge, I felt the difficulties on my own skin. The disproportion between the two currencies made it impossible to support life in London with Reais. Jobs there were tough and hard to find. The sad differences between Brazil and the United Kingdom were more and more blatant. Not only because it was

always drizzling there, without any sun, but mainly because the development of the economic and social areas contrasted two very different worlds. The misspending of the English wealth hurt because of the Brazilian misery and of the other countries "in eternal development". The comparison with the beloved homeland was always inevitable and extremely painful. Dear God: why such an unequal, unfair and ignorant world?

In that house, I spent approximately two months. A total insanity. The **jobs** for Latin-Americans, everyone knows, are those that the English do not want. Hence, we worked as waiters, cleaners, baby sitters, leaflet distributors, attendants in bars, restaurants, hotels etc. We used to work as "handyman", "general services assistant". There weren´t any freelance carriers' spots just because of the cold (the human and the climatic one) and of the police. We all tried the job of mason, which salary was higher. The schedules of our jobs were quite varied.

During 24 hours a day, seven days a week, there were people arriving and leaving the house (a dwelling with the highest demographic density that I have ever heard of, lol...).

At this time, I was working at night, as a cleaner, in an office in downtown London. It was my first job.

By the way, it was the first year that I did cleaning services, even on Christmas and New Year´s Eve. After, to make matters worse, I did not get any pence from my English boss. The guy deceived me: as he discovered that my **visa** was the tourist one, and not the student one, what prevented me from working, he let me clean for two and a half months, without paying me, until I decided to abandon the gig. And, in this case, I couldn´t even think about suing him!

It was Christmas time. The city was taken by a more peaceful feeling than the normal one. Remarkably, even without money and feeling a mixture of sadness and rebellion due to the prejudicial dirty trick that Tony, my English boss, had done, I ended up being taken by the Christmas spirit. I´ve always thought that, at Christmas, people get slightly less selfish and intolerant, opening a slot in the heart for love and for solidarity. And then, inspired by Santa, I´ve overcome the trauma of being psychologically abused by someone who thought that his country was to exploit, in a legitimate way, other nations. Ironically, at this troubled time I wrote about love, as you can see in the poem below. I define it as tacky, broadly known and profound. What are the changes that you (also driven by it) would do in it? Notice that I wrote about love, but without using this magic word.

Replace and Irreplaceable

Quite simple
Complicated topic
Written by a beginner
Eternally unfinished.

Supreme feeling
It explains why we are here
Where we come from
Towards where we head.

There's no word to explain it
It's the essence of every one and all
Only those who live it understand it
Here is its enchantment, great mystery.

Humane purpose
Translated by life
A few know it for real
It teaches you to live, no one doubts that.

Also expressed by a kiss
By the look, by a book
For going, staying, dreaming, realizing
Being, smiling, a friend.

It conquers weak and strong
A good guide on any road
Eternally unforgettable
It rules the great stay.

Existing in several shapes
Each one practices it in a way
Beginning of happiness
It's a highlight in the perfect world.

Everyone gets drunk with it
It's beyond good or evil
In the hilarious circus of life
It's the enlightenment of carnival.

Surrounded in certain ways
These are called imperfection
Shield, barrier or refuge
Suppress the heart.

Reason to live
Letters will not explain it
There is life only when something is loved
Its reason is simply to love...

And this was the end of 2003 for me. Up to that moment, I could communicate with my family and with my friends in Brazil through the telephone. There was a way to call to other countries for a price that was quite reasonable, even for Latin-Americans students, but only on Sundays. Thus, observing the difference in the time zones so as to call in appropriate times, as far as possible, I would miss them a little less.

I remember clearly that on a relatively sunny Sunday I discovered the **influence of the sun** for the human mind (as well as the consequence of its lack, as it happens in many European countries). It had been about six weeks that I had arrived in the English capital. I was already cleaning that office at night, but up to that moment I hadn´t received any pence of a pound. In my mind, the deception for not having the student visa with a work permit, but only the tourist one. And it was rather unfair since I was a student indeed! The initial shock concerning the differences between a rich country such as one in the United Kingdom and the Brazilian misery still prevented me from thinking of other things. Feelings such as sadness, revolt and insurgence dominated my spirit. Finding myself helpless, hurt, I´ve realized that I was a little depressed. Body and mind were getting acquainted with tiredness, which was unknown until then. During three or four weeks, I slept for about 12 hours per day, waking up unbelievably tired.

So, I decided to sleep early on a Saturday night, and, on a Sunday, a little before midday, I was woken up by sun light that came through by the wholes on the curtain. I got surprised once I was taken by this well-being and happiness. I didn´t have breakfast. I didn´t make lunch. I had some glasses of water, then elongated, put on appropriate pants to exercise and

went out to go running. I left home and, already on my first steps outside, I realized a common feeling in other people as well. It was the sun!!! The energy of the sun. In a city like London, where the drizzle is constant, especially in the winter, sunny days are rare. And most of the times, not better than partly sunny.

I don´t have the exact data, but I suppose that the rainy climate and the cloudy sky characterized not less than three hundred days a year. Considering the bad weather, the working hours and the study load of a foreign student coming from a poor country, the possibility of enjoying the sun is almost like winning the lottery. Conversely, students from rich countries, in their free time, are more like tourists than workers. Good for them. A curious fact: it is almost always cloudy or rainy, but most of the times the main conversation topic is the weather and its forecast. Would it be a lack of subject?

Anyway... It was on this Sunday, in the end of 2003, that I realized how much the sun influences our humor, happiness, willingness, joy, well-being etc. I realized the sun meant quality of life, much more important than only transmitting vitamin D. On the buses and underground trains, people seemed more willing, slept less, smiled more, looked at each other joyfully, transmitting to one another a positive energy. The euphoria was such that I thought that those who were not happy at that moment wouldn´t be so in any other opportunity.

Going on with our report, some days after that, I managed to enroll in a **public library**, in *Kentish Town*, a borough close to *Camden Town*. From there I could borrow some books, among those two or three by Charles Dickens, and some others of law. I used to read English papers available to the library users and, mainly, I used the internet (so that I wouldn´t have to pay a cyber cafe). The limit for surfing on the web was of one hour daily. But I did not access the World Wide Web more than twice a week, obviously due to a matter of time, so precious then. Also in this library, I spent hours and hours finding shelter from the intense cold. As I lived in place where the heating was controlled by stingy old folks – described further ahead –, who

preferred to wear a coat inside the house rather than spend some pence of pounds to pay the gas of the heating, the library was pretty warm and it was a divine refuge to read and escape from the cold.

One thing I couldn´t do in this public and silent place was to read out loud (what I used to do back home, in order to acquire **fluency and to lose the** Brazilian **accent**). Sometimes I would write whole texts using solely the signs of the pronunciation table from the dictionary. It is the most efficient method for any Foreign Language student. I also wrote a glossary (and read it over again a dozen of times), with more than a 1000 words and their meanings, so as to improve my **vocabulary** (for knowledge) and to obtain a University of Cambridge **certificate** (for my CV).

As we know, the European winter is absolutely freezing. On the streets, even with appropriate clothes, we felt very cold. The advantage in relation to the *pampa gaucho* (where the winter also has low temperatures) is that in Europe closed places have **heating** and windows with **double glazing or thick glasses**. Thus, inside the houses people wear short-sleeved t-shirts and shorts, but on the street, they wear heavy clothes as much as they can. It is fun to see when foreigners, who are not used to this situation, like me, forget about the difference of temperature between indoors and outdoors. The first time I went outdoors wearing a short-sleeved t-shirt and a pair of shorts, fooled by the internal heating of the building, I was almost sold as an ice bar! Oh dear! I spent about three days rolled up in a blanket, not feeling my body... Hahaha...

Then, I moved from that house of Brazilians to one close to the school I was going to at that time, in Camden Town (a borough located in the North, the richest region of the city). Those who have already been there know that it is certainly one of the places with the greatest diversity of human beings on the entire Planet! In the beginning, I even got startled, because almost everything and everyone were new to me, as someone coming from Ijuí, a small town in the northwest of Rio Grande do Sul. But, little by little, I started getting used to and interacting with the differences. In a few days, I noticed how much my existence was being enriched by a

cosmopolitan social contact. And I searched for new experiences as much as I could. I starved and felt cold, got unemployed, completely broke, and sick, I thought I would die missing my beloved ones. But I handled it. I´ve never doubted it was a **necessary learning process** for someone who aimed at knowing the world the way it really is (quite different from the shielded one in a nice and protective way by our parents...). To be able to go back home any time I wanted was the biggest assurance that I had, guaranteed by a return air ticket already bought here in Brazil even before I had boarded.

Every minute that went by I felt I was living a kind of **metamorphoses**. Not that I was a narcissist, but I was loving to get to know myself better, by observing my attitudes towards the new and different facts that were taking place every day. I was fully aware and intended to go to extremes, always seeking a less ignorant and happier balance. When I shaved my head, convinced that the hair, beard and clothes were some sort of disguise adopted by each one of us, I had no more doubts of how much I was already integrated into the new cosmopolitan atmosphere... Hahaha... One of the styles that were tried was the Mohican one:

This so called second refuge of mine was a little bedroom, in Camden Town, in an apartment of an English couple, Jack and Margareth, each one with 75 years of life experience (150 years of learning). I confess that I learned a lot **living with this foreign family**, even though it was not always in a pleasant way.

I found the place through Alexandra, the secretary of the school where I used to study English. She was Argentinean and we treated each other as *hermanos*. This South-American lady knew that I was so much in trouble, needing a place to live cheap enough and close to the school (so that I wouldn´t spend money commuting and would have more time to work), although the educational establishment was located in Camden, in an expensive area for Brazilian students. One morning, Alexandra gave me a note, saying that she had found a place that seemed to be the one I was looking for. Nevertheless, tilting her head, raising her eyebrows and with a suspicious look on her face, she made an observation that the price of the rent was exactly half of what they would usually charge for in that area. Even so, she advised me: "Go check what it is like, as you won´t have to pay just to take a look at it!" And I surely did. I even intended to ask for a discount... Hahaha...

Apparently, it seemed to me that it was the ideal place. A room just for myself, having the opportunity to practice the English language… quite the opposite of what was happening in that house full of Brazilian friends. It was next to the school I was going to, in a neighborhood where everybody wanted to live, for half of the price of the market.

Well then… Slowly, things were becoming quite different: the old Jack waking me up in the middle of the night saying that I should evict the room the morning after as I hadn´t paid him the rent, but he would always apologize and wish me a good night after I reminded him I´d already paid and showed him the receipt. Even worse, there were rats in my room. Up until then, I was completely disgusted by those animals, but little by little, I had to put up with them, having to sleep not minding if they were right next to me. Later on, I managed to take a picture of them! And I could only use the kitchen and the bathroom when the dear old landlord couple was home, considering that they used to be away daily for hours!

Besides, there were several times when I arrived home and saw Jack meddling with my things – he also had the key of my bedroom! –, I believe he was checking whether I was a terrorist or something like that. But it is all

right. To get to 75 years of age and have to rent a room of your own house to an unknown student mustn´t be something so easy...

The low price and the good location of the place made me stay there for approximately three months. Jack and Margareth were "moody", but they usually liked to talk. They would tell me things about England, about the history of London, about what life was like there etc. I´ve heard quite interesting stories of two people who lived amid World War II. And imagine the situation; with my two surnames: Zancan Frantz, the first Italian and the second German. It wouldn´t be a surprise if the two old folks did not keep a profound resentment towards Nazi fascists!

As they only found out my full name after I was already living there with them, they suspected that, with those European surnames, I could perhaps not even be Brazilian. I tried to explain it to them, but I´m sure that they also suspected that I could be an enemy spy, all those decades afterwards... Hahaha... And I had fun with all that. After all, these are things that we don´t see here, in our dearest Brazil. With the spirit relatively light, I was seeking for strength in my belief that, **if we let stress, problems, excessive work, expectations etc. to take hold of our time and of our mind, we will allow adverse possession to be done of our life**...

It is also interesting to mention the worry that Jack and Margareth had with their **health**. It impressed me, because they looked around 10 years younger than they claimed to be. They had healthy habits. They would eat every two hours, just a little bit each time. Their "menu" was filled with pulses, non-transgenic vegetables, fruits, and fish. And they didn´t eat anything frozen. That´s why they would often repeat: "We don´t have a freezer at home".

Both would fast for a day every month. As soon as I got to know that, I waited for the "special" date and played a trick on them. I cooked their favorite dish, roasted fish fillet, filling the whole house with its delicious aroma. On that day, they were around my roast meal. They would repeat several times that to feast was something healthy, maybe to convince themselves about that. But they did not ask me for a small bite at all. And

they only had water during that whole day. All I wanted was for them to yield and to ask me for some food. But they did not. Perhaps because the English pride wouldn´t let them ask "a poor Latin-American" for help. And I won´t lie: Jack rejected my help even to carry things, justifying that the remains of my energy should be used for me to try to keep up with an English man, what I would hardly achieve.

So as to make myself clear in this paragraph, I need to anticipate the narrative and mention my most daring and most fun deed in London. To cut the story short, I played the saxophone on the streets and tube stations of the English capital. Going on with our text, Jack was a retired trumpet player and loved talking about music. It was such fun to see him beat around the bush until he finally asked me how much money I had made playing on the street that day. The old man was feeling jealous and would always point out that, if he were my age, he would´ve played better and would´ve got more. And I amused myself with it.

Then, I started working through a **job agency**. I would work mainly as a waiter in banquets in hotels, and also, after, as a bartender serving and preparing drinks behind counters (on the opposite side of the one I had always been!) of several bars, as you can see on the next photo.

Differently from the work of a cleaner, in these jobs I was paid relatively on time. That was when I started making ends meet in London, after the poorest 75 days of my life.

At that time, I would count every penny to pay my weekly bills. I had never eaten so much pasta, potato and rice (cheaper foods). The cold, the rain and the snow would prevent me from doing exercises on the streets and parks, as the other options were too expensive for me. Hence, I soon noticed the growing prominence and the inevitable deposit of carbohydrates in my abdomen... Hahaha... Then, I got astonished and started going jogging even if it were cold or in the rain. I enrolled in a school where the annual installment was the same of the monthly one of the school I was going to until then. I kept on going to classes in the morning, and working in the afternoon and at night, and sometimes in the morning as well.

But the work at the agency was uncertain and unpredictable. For instance, in a week I´d work more than eighty hours, while in the following ones I wouldn´t work not even for an hour. I had to find a better alternative. Therefore, now I´m going to tell you **one of the best stories of this trip**, about playing on the streets, as I had just anticipated a while ago. The fact

is that, on the second fortnight of November 2003, I had 240 pounds. I needed 180 to pay the monthly rent, in the middle of December. And I had no job. My expenses with food and transportation would cost me 15 pounds a week. That is, in 4 weeks, all my money would be gone.

In order to explain this tale better, I have to mention that, in Brazil, before I traveled, I was studying music and I could play the saxophone a little bit. When I took off to England, the weight limit for baggage was solely 25 kilos. So, I only took the essential, leaving my sax here in Brazil. I decided that I´d buy another instrument there. And that is what I did. After looking for a saxophone with a reasonable price on every corner of London, I found one in a store in Baker Street. The salesman described the instrument like this: "We bought this used sax for 200 pounds. It is in a dreadful state. We will fix this old stuff and will sell it for about 800 pounds." Indeed, the "product of my dreams" was in a terrible condition. But, despite these facts, it produced a sound that could be recognized as one coming from a sax. And it was the only one I could afford!

What did I do? I came to the conclusion that I had two options. The first one was to spend my money to pay the rent, transportation and food, probably having to go back to Brazil in the following month, because I would run out of money. The second alternative was quite risky: buying the sax with that money and playing it on the street, as many artists would do. Perhaps I would get enough to breathe the London air for a little longer. Or maybe I´d run out beforehand or I could even be deported, as playing on the street without an authorization implied a police intervention. Taken by the adventurous spirit that dominated me since the beginning of my journey, I ended up buying the aforementioned sax. I paid 200 pounds for the instrument which was in a "dreadful state", after two hours in the store "tailoring" the business. The salesman said he didn´t profit anything, in a tone of "sorrow and solidarity". I thanked him for his "help". Thus, as I said before, not to be penniless and to have to go back to Brazil in the following month, I needed to recover the "investment" in four weeks.

Believe it or not, I left the music store happy and anxious. Without rehearsing once, I went up to Oxford Street, the main street in London, and started to play in front of Selfridges, one of the most expensive stores of the city. I knew that the people who were coming out from the store had money, as well as it was expressly prohibited to play in that place. Even so, I took the risk of playing some keys. I was laughing because I was doing such a

risky thing, fearing that the police would arrest me. I wished no musician passed by the place at that moment, not to hear something so out of tune! And there I was, making noise during a whole hour. After sixty minutes, my lips couldn´t take any longer, and the fear of the probable police intervention made me tremble. So I stopped. I quickly put away the instrument and the coins I had got inside a case I had left on the floor. In a few seconds, I was inside the bus, going home, no believing in the insanity I had done. You can check it out!

When I arrived in my bedroom, I was still trembling due to my nervousness; I opened the case of the instrument and counted the coins. Surprisingly, I had made 35 pounds!!! In order to locate the reader, this value corresponded to the wages of at least eight hours of work as a waiter, the activity that I was doing till then. In other words, playing on

the street during one hour meant serving drinks and cleaning tables for eight hours. It could´ve been beginner´s luck. But I had no doubt that having risked the money of the rent, food and transportation in the purchase of the almost dead sax had been a great business.

The repertoire was not vast, but restlessly repeated. Pixinguinha and Tom Jobim were my saviors, as well as the Pink Panther´s song. Generally speaking, **Brazil was fashionable abroad**. Brazilian music, football and carnival are very well-known by foreigners. All of them like the yellow and green informality, enjoy the Latin human warmth and admire the beauties of our country. People are curious to know how come we´re so joyful and party lovers even though we have so many problems. By the way, take a look at this fair in downtown London in honor to Brazil. During 4 weeks, this Christ of Redemption of 15 meters of height blessed the "gringos".

Going on with the story of the sax, I started rehearsing at home from the day after the first time onwards and improved my performance on the streets, always at the same place. In a month, the instrument had already paid itself and it was also paying my expenses. The problem was that, after a few days, the police already knew me. The rule was that musicians should obey the order to stop playing in forbidden places, otherwise they´d be arrested. And, as they were telling me to stop every day,

the police officers lost their patience with me. One day, when I had been playing for a few weeks, just stopping with a police order, I was surrounded by the cops. They told me to stop immediately and to never play on the street again. If they caught me one more time, just once, I´d be arrested. And I believed them. Because of that, my job as a street musician ended at that moment. In all modesty, isn´t it an amazing story? Today, similar to several other things I´ve also done, I felt shivers down my spine just thinking about the risks that I took (being arrested there does not mean getting free, as it happens in Brazil...).

The first weeks of 2004 were passing by. A very harsh winter in Europe. My head would spin round and round and around the world, and my mood would go from moments of depression to other of euphoria. I would usually have a pen and some paper with me, always trying to write what I was feeling. As a result, I jotted down some poems. "The Meaning of Reason" was one of them:

The Meaning of Reason

As we think and reflect
We discover new paths
Of the fascinating maze of life
In which we seek flowers, not thorns.

To doubt brings pure thoughts
Although perfection
Foundation of wisdom
Never is the constant reflection.

Fly around the world
Even when the body is in one place only
Imagining the practice of different wings
We suppose where we would land.

When we come back from each flight
We are not as we used to be any longer
Since each thought
Brings the man new dreams.

I guess life is nothing
More than the eternal reflection
Part of it, the Earthy adventure
Is the experiment of imperfection.

If man were perfect
His maker wouldn't be so
As the reflective doubt
Generates pleasure and wisdom.

Perfection differs from happiness
Complete order of the paradox of life
Thinking is the source of eternal pleasure
In the maze, it leads to the way out.

There's no life without thinking
There's no choice without freedom
Only the one who thinks can choose
Free thinking gives birth to opportunity.

Imagining the appearance of the Being
The one who flies in time lives longer
If reflecting is existence itself
It only becomes eternal through thought.

I wish to think, to discover and to know
Doubt, question, research and learn
And relating theory and practice
To eternalize myself through eternal living.

Hail to Rational Immunization!

In Brazil, due to the "life fit for a king" that I had in my splendid cradle of a middle class, I had never worked, cooked, washed the dishes, done the laundry, cleaned the house and had never done the other countless things that are not so pleasant to be done. In London, I confess, I developed the taste for cooking sporadically, nothing else (Hahaha...).

Before I forget to point out, immensely grateful, I have to tell that as soon as I got to England I met with some Spanish **friends**, who had lived in Brazil during some years. I mean the siblings Paco and Monica. Justice be done, together with Amy, Paco's English girlfriend, they were the ones who gave me an extremely important moral and psychological support. Among

others, they would listen to me every now and again, giving me advice, helping me, distracting me and inviting me for quite interesting outings. They turned out to be great friends, for whom I will eternally be grateful, hoping that one day I may pay back their thoughtful solidarity. Actually, during all the time that I was in the English capital, my friends Paco and Amy were essential. It was a pity that Monica soon went back to live in Spain. I hope it was not because I had gone to London! (Laughter...)

In February 2004, an incredible coincidence happened. In this megacity, with millions inhabitants, I was half asleep, sitting in bus, coming back from work, when, suddenly, I ran into a compatriot called Cristina Sanfelici, with whom I had talked to as soon as she had arrived there. I recognized a young lady sitting on a close by seat and startled her by greeting her. We talked for a couple of minutes, exchanged phone numbers, addresses and, after a few days, I moved to her apartment as a **subtenant** (the most common contractual relationship to foreigners). The tenants were a family from Malaysia, the couple had English names: Richard and Linda. Their daughter, who was seven years old, was called Ing Yee.

Living with this Malaysian family, with a Chinese culture, I also learned a lot. They had already been in London for about five years. Richard was taking his master degree in business administration and used to sell hats in a fair in Camden on weekends. When he finished the course, he got a job as a supervisor in a big supermarket network. Linda worked as a cook in a Chinese restaurant. He worked from early in the morning till the end of the afternoon. She worked from the beginning of the afternoon till around midnight. Both only had one day off a week, which rarely coincided.

Little Ing Yee, besides studying in the morning and in the afternoon in a school for children in that neighborhood, would get home, in the end of the afternoon or in the evening (depending on the time of the year), and would do exercises that her demanding parents had prepared for her "to occupy her time well". The seven-year old child almost didn´t play, and was subjected to a study disciplinary regime more rigid than the one of a Brazilian adult who intends to pass in a tough contest. And it seems to me

that, generally, "educated" Orientals have this way of thinking.

Cristina and I didn´t see each other so often either, we used to work, study and sleep at different times. That is, the busy lives we had wouldn´t let us sit and talk in that house. Our relationship was limited to exchanging a few words when we used the kitchen quickly and simultaneously. Or we´d repeat the greetings "Hi", "Bye", "See you", "How are you?", when we got or left home. Still, our interaction would be completed every time we had to pay the **weekly rent** and did it together**, always in advance** (in general, payments are done weekly). In other words, **life** was so **busy** that we didn´t have time even to talk to the people who were our flat mates.

This was my third and last home in London. It was quite close to the second dwelling, both in Camden Town. When you are **away from home**, **family and friends**, it is common to feel quite lost, mainly when we are Latin-American students in a rich country such as England, working in every possible way to pay the rent of a room, food, studies, transportation. And all these items in a quite simple way, always creating and innovating so as to save...

Well, hence came the opportunity to live in the same house as someone from the same Brazilian and "gaucha" town that I had come from. On that context of differences, it was as if I had found my family. And it was no different. Cristina and I became good friends, adventurers, helping each other with the same culture. If I´m not mistaken, I moved there in February 2004. Owing to that, I want to write with immense gratitude that the familiarity with Cristina as well as her help were fundamental in this successful journey as an Adventurer Learner Backpacker.

Also, very pleased I mention again a bit of the great and fundamental support that my family was giving me. They would send me by mail newspaper cuts and magazines from Brazil, sugar cane candy, little gifts and gaucha yerba mate herb. In the same way, around March 2004, I got two beautiful poems from my parents. Both talked about trips. The one from my mother, although it had been dedicated to me, is a great **guidance** to all travelers. Emotional and proud, I share it with you:

Crossing

My Bonny went to Sea:
-"It's necessary to sail."

There are dangers on the way
My Bonny goes forward
Its teenage dream
Is greater than the Sea itself.

Go ahead Teen-Bonny
To decipher the mysteries of the Sea!

"- My Bonny, be prudent!
Don't take risks in vain."
But, as an adventurer,
It laughs at my fear, mocks me.

My Bonny, still so young,
Does not fear the fury of the Sea!

The Old Sea has its stories
A thousand stories to tell
My Bonny goes on attentive
Collecting stories from the Sea.

Go ahead smart Bonny
In search for the transparent Sea!

Citizen of the Sea, fearless
The Bonny sails, curious,
In old closed shells
It hides the mysterious Sea.

My confident Bonny
Defies the bold Sea!

A blanket embroidered by stars
Covers the giant aquarium
And the Bonny, a dreamer,
Questions the distant star.

And the Bonny goes ahead
In its unstoppable search!

Go Bonny, but be careful,
The Sea hides dangers
Capable of surprising
Fierce sailors.

The Bonny sets its journey
It knows well, it's not alone!

In yarns with silver threads
It leaves childhood behind
It makes plans, builds dreams,
Learner of living it becomes.

And the Bonny does not give up
In its persistent voyage!

In the giant crossing
It dives in its inner Sea
It penetrates lights and shadows
In a changing gesture.

It searches for injured birds
In lost misplacement

When the crossing is complete
The daring learner will return
Much bigger and much stronger
Ready to be happier.

Maria Helena Zancan Frantz.

As for my father´s poem, whose source of inspiration was not me, it suits me well. And I am sure that **our ancestors would be thrilled** with such honor, since they really crossed the seas in search of new hopes. I think that the poem captivates the feeling of those who "go far way", in search for better life conditions. It is worth to take a look at it.

The Migrant

When hope dies,
the secular dreams,
from the old and sweet homes,
migrate together through the seas.

Surrounded by moonlight,
when drifting on brave waters,
hope resurrects,
in another place, beyond sea!

Without his loved ones already,
from old and distant places,
from them the silent pains
he has to stand.

However, when incarnating,
in renewed dreams,
the first dawns are born
from other and new loved ones,
which make the pains ease.

From old migrated dreams
and reborn hopes,
peoples intertwine,
new lives flourish.
From the lives as these accomplished
such flourished hopes,
new homes arise,
other looks,
in new places.

Walter Frantz.

In March of the same year, I got a job in a bar in Islington, very close to Camden Town. The place was sad and funny. It was sad because, at ten in the morning, there was already a line of alcoholic clients at the door, waiting to begin and to sustain their addiction. And it was funny because the age range of the costumers was close to 70 years of age, and all of them would get drunk! Their pastime was to find the oldest one of the group.

One of the best things of these jobs was undoubtedly the friendships we make there. We always find different minds, with whom we can learn and have fun, simultaneously. In this pub where I worked, we were Brazilians, Polish, Australians, Irish and English. Surrounded by cigarette smoke and the heavy work, we managed to have fun.

I went there 3 or 4 times in search of work, always trying to do my best in pronouncing the English language, putting a smile on my face and trying to pass the confidence that I would be capable of serving drinks behind a bar. By that time, I was already an expert in **looking for a job**.

During the three previous weeks, I would leave home every day of the week around seven in the morning. I had got callus on my fingers for having to knock so many times on every door looking for any job. I would always go back home after midnight, sad, very sad for not having got a job. I had never felt so devastated. But, this time, it had worked out!

In order to amuse you, I confess that, even before these three hard weeks, during about three months I was the author of the achievement of getting nothing less than 15 jobs. And in all of them, I was fired on the same day I was hired. In none of them I got to work twice. What happened was that all the employers asked me for experience, even if the jobs were simple,

such as waiters, kitchen hands, cleaners, barmen etc. As inexperienced people did not have a chance, of course I was obliged to lie.

And I didn´t feel guilty for doing so, what could be considered immoral. I needed to work to pay the rent, the food, transportation and school, so lying that I had had experiences in those jobs was a matter of survival. Moreover, I was in an extremely rich country, which acted in an absolute immoral and unethical way in relation to poor nations, such as the Brazilian one, for centuries.

By the bye, I can´t help protesting against the revolting and ultra-brutal difference of conditions among the students and tourists from rich countries and the ones from poor ones. The rule was, while they lived well and easily, we gave our blood only to survive. Is it?

As an afterthought, in the worst case scenario, I was already relating my white lie to the criminal attack the United Kingdom was doing, together with the USA, to Iraq. Of course that one thing didn´t have to do with the other, but I needed to find a way to excuse my conduct as an unemployed man **in trouble**. If they had a vast experience in exploiting poor peoples, why couldn´t I, who was being unfairly jeopardized by them, disobey their rules?

Thus, even if in Brazil I had only studied, generally denying myself to sweep the floor I had dirtied or to do the dishes I had used, I claimed I had worked for years and years in such jobs. Hence, I inevitably misused the cleaning products, since I didn´t have any idea what each one was used for! In the same way, I was very much reprehended for the informal posture with which I treated the clients. And the worst of all is that I almost got beaten for the incompetence at preparing the most different cocktails!!! In a noisy place, to understand drunken foreigners, speaking their own language, is not easy... (Aaahahaha*_@!#.... Now I have fun and laugh a lot about it...)

Surely, asking my doubts to the employer wasn´t possible. If I had filmed everything, I could´ve been awarded for a great comedy. The truth is that if they had accepted my **inexperience** and explained to me the work

during only one day, teaching me the way they wanted me to do things; I would have managed it for sure, any human being would, but, due to the English insensibility, it wasn´t like that. Only experienced people had a chance.

As a result, I heard swearing, complaints, biased offences and the order to leave the place. With my head down, I tried to learn with the situation and to get a little less inexperienced for the next attempt. Whenever I left the places, on the street already, I usually smiled or cried, sometimes the two of them simultaneously. Even so, several times I would just go back to looking for a job on the same day.

In this **search for "a place in the sun"**, it was not rebellion that was mostly in my mind. I was always daydreaming, thinking about forces, Gods or physical energies superior to us and to our humane comprehension. I used to keep in mind that my scribbles would become a good book. So I´d sell its author rights to some publisher or a rich and good person, in a way that, with this money (or donation) I´d be able to live in a simple and calm way for the rest of my life, observing the world, life and writing, besides participating of social programs and helping other people as much as I could, without having to worry about my own financial support. This fiction distracted me and made me strong to face the tough reality.

When "the token fell" that that dream would not come true, I´d keep walking around London and observing everything. So I´d go to another illusion. I saw so many rich people with no time to spend their money, with so much state that their own timing wouldn´t be enough to seize it. I identified people who are advancing in age who did not have their life altered by money (many of them simply didn´t even know what to do with their own fortune, except how to multiply it). Thus, I thought of trying to contact millionaires or famous people: "I wondered if I wrote a letter to each of the one thousand richest people in London or in the world, would any of them help me?" I came to the conclusion that none would even read my request! But I was sure that, whoever helped, he/she would be eternally proud for his/her attitude, since such would be the good deeds that I would be able to

do throughout the world! And my "helper" would be the coauthor of all that! All of a sudden, before these dreams came true, something happened: I got a fine job... Hahaha... But I´m still waiting for a good purchase or a generous donation!

Cristina, my fellow citizen and friend who also lived in the apartment sublet from the tenants from Malaysia, had got **"the best" job** that a Latin-American could wish for: attendant in a small hotel, working in front of a computer, with schedule to start and finish the work journey, even knowing how many times I´d work each week. The English lottery for Brazilians. And the luck she had of getting this "gig" was transferred to me. Cristina intended to go back to Brazil in July 2004, besides that, she´d leave her job weeks before going home to travel a little, as almost all foreign students wish to. Talking to the owner of the small hotel, Mr. J. Desire, I got to inherit Cristina´s luck.

For the first time in my life I quit a job. I was still working at that bar in Islington, which was full of alcoholic old folks. Till then, I had only asked for a job and had been fired. When I lied about having experience in the field of work or did not present the passport to prove the work permit, as required to foreigners by the English employers, the job would not last more than a few hours.

I had been in London for eight months. Finally, things seemed to improve considerably. With a **reasonable job, fixed schedule and payment** up to date, I started managing to put my **plans** into **practice**. A new phase of my learning and adventurous trip began, which had started only with a 25-kg backpack full of clothes and documents, but in which what weighed the most was the dreams I had.

I used to work from 5 pm to 8 am of the following day. I´d close the reception of the hotel at mid-night and stay on call, taking a nap right there, at the reception, until 6 in the morning. Then I´d wake up, prepare the kitchen for breakfast, eat something and open reception at 7 am sharp. I´d work up to 8 o´clock, when the day receptionist arrived. So I´d go to class, which ended at 12h00min (always being **punctual**, as all British timetables

are...). I´d arrive home about 30 minutes after that, I´d make lunch and then sleep until 3 pm, almost always dreaming that I was sleeping. I´d wake up at this time, shivering of exhaustion and still quite half-asleep. I´d take a shower and run to catch the bus, hoping not to have too much traffic. And I´d sleep a little more during transportation. Luckily, in an hour and a half I´d be working, exactly at 5 pm.

And this was my routine during months. In the beginning of the job as a hotel receptionist, in May, I used to work solely three times a week. But from July onwards, when Cristina left all the chores of a night receptionist to me, I managed to increase my schedule, working six or even every day of the week. Once again, thanks a lot Cristina!!! This was the reception:

At this time, I discovered a great example of a **bargain**, of a British **transport** company. For 1 pound – a fifth of what you get for each worked hour, considering the English minimum salary –, you could travel to any of the approximately 40 biggest cities of Great Britain. A round-trip ticket cost only 2 pounds. Something like a ticket to go and come back for solely 2

Reais! I believe the local government sponsored the tickets which were not sold at less busy times. Or perhaps if they used similar strategies to those used by air companies, which sold tickets to go to European countries for the price of about five beers, charging some more as airport charge, the flights would get fully-booked and everyone would gain.

It was tourists´ joy, as well as of the commerce of the cities visited, which profited with the visitors. Well, that could become a new trend, right? Anyway, what´s important is that on my days off I could seize such bargain. And I traveled as much as I could. From April to November 2004 I visited more than 20 British cities, due to the unbeatable bargain of a ticket for 1 pound.

The first city visited was Brighton, which was located near London and where there was a beach. The main touristic attraction there, a very beautiful mosque, was already worth the ticket. See if you agree.

As the reception of this small hotel wasn´t so busy, there would always be some spare time to think of other things rather than the job´s duties. This way I reflected a lot about how this exchange was coming about, digesting part of the experience carried out till then. As a result, among other things, a simple poem occurred to me again. It summarizes a great part of the first eight months of the trips: enormous difficulties, physical and mental exhaustion, pressure, injustice, deception, the imminence of having to go back home without carrying out most of the trips I had dreamed of.

Two Steps Away from Heaven

I've been having the feeling
That I stopped living.
Nightmares, for not making dreams come true
Deceptions, for knowing so little of all.
The invincible leads to exhaustion
The deception that could be predicted is bitter.

Time flies
I stopped I don't know where
I don't know what I'm waiting for
No. Actually I know well
I only feel this way
Because there is nothing I can do.

Unable, I'm still hopeful.
But when it is over
In this world I'll die.
I'll be a lamb again
Of a more than happy flock
But in a way that I cannot be.

Hence, I'll have to comfort myself
On the contrary, depressed I'll bury myself.
Condemned to ignorance

Aging without experiences
Surviving in the environment
How miserable, I considered.

Hilarious human beings
Of paradise they made hell.
In such fascinating world
They created heaven for demons
Where wise men are unhappy
Of ignorant and subordinate ones.

My thoughts have scared me.
Tiny, but smiles on photographs.
Of my dream
This is the essence-ruin.
I'm ember, almost ashes
And I must be fire, with my own actions.

I ask myself whether the best
Wouldn't be to be miserable as well.
But then I realize
The moment I'm going through.
Confusion due to tiredness
Every hypothesis might be considered.

But even among lightening
With a terrible cold
I go ahead in time
Searching for the sun.
The dampness of the night is over, I look to the side
Experiment, rehearsal, mere football?

If soon on my days
I don't find shelter
Beaten, lost
Head and feet on the ground
I'll make the enemy
of a grave, guardian.

Perhaps not even mine
But of a lost dream
That got bigger
Flew away
But tried to be king
And died homeless.

What to do?
Agony, irony
I'm happy and I write this down
It's just a game! Fantasy

That until yesterday was unknown
And today I know, it is to live.

Here I perform another important register. Substituting Cristina´s vacancy in the apartment, another fellow citizen landed in London as well, Sérgio Callai. A student of Engineering in Ijuí, he spent around seven months devising cheap alternatives to have fun in London. As most of foreign people, Sérgio worked as a waiter. After that, for a few weeks, he occupied my vacancy at the reception of the hotel, initially conquered by Cristina.

From that moment onwards (working at the hotel), I started **saving money**, traveling outside of England, studying more calmly, even attending some courses in London universities. The job at the hotel was excellent if compared to the other ones I had beforehand, even more because I got to become friends with Mr. J. Desire, its owner and manager, to whom I´m very grateful for the work opportunity that I had. It was he, who allowed me to work every day, afterwards, from September on, in two or three weeks of the month.

I also managed to cumulate the shifts of the receptionist who worked during the day, on weekends. Thus, on weekdays, I´d work from 5 pm of one day up to 8 am of the following day. As for Fridays, I´d start at 5 pm and would end at 8 am of the following Monday. Youth, health and mainly the will of traveling made me submit to this excess and even ask to work this much, aiming at saving to be able to pay for my trips. Surely, some naps, taken in the middle of the morning when reception was calm, softened the exhaustion.

Lastly, in this hotel, I made up my real headquarter. There, I used the internet to organize and plan all my trips henceforth. I also studied when I wasn´t busy and had some friends over to talk, combining work and leisure. What was equally interesting was that I could talk to guests who came from several corners of our so diverse planet, always learning and trying to observe the characteristics of our absolutely fascinating world.

Finally, it was there that I started writing a **blog**, a virtual site to communicate with my family and friends. There I described in a simple and short way some of the impressions that I had of several of these circumstances. From June to November, I wrote at the very computer of the hotel where I used to work. The publications in this blog were usually posted weekly. As the keyboard used was configured to the English Language, my writings, in Portuguese, did not have diacritical marks. Therefore, I needed to perform a little adaptation to qualify the publication (in this book) of what was written in the aforementioned virtual site. I also highlight that the time of each posting was determined by Brazilian time, since, in Europe, even the clocks and watches are a little fast... Hahaha...

As for the months of December 2004 and January 2005, it was when I virtually jotted down my writings in cyber cafés, in the places I was visiting. From now on, you will have access to this communication that was primarily virtual. Finishing the report of the first eight months of my adventure, let us go to the second part of these writings!

VIRTUAL JOTTINGS FROM THE BLOG

I´m **having so much fun**... And much more than that: I´ve been **learning to live** and **to share**. It is wonderful to travel to know as much as I can of the world, of life, of others and of myself. I wish to everyone that life is a synonym of joy and of happiness! I hope that in this site we may help each other through the **exchange of ideas, information and entertainment**.

Who am I? Among certainties, pretensions, dreams, doubts and gossip from the opposition (hahaha...), I´m endeavoring to qualify my living. I´m no more than any other being on the same boat, which sails towards existential richness. Day by day, I have progressed in this great challenge, even though there´s much difficulty in overcoming the differences between dreams and reality. With constant overcoming, what I´ve discovered has been more than enough to feed **dreams and hopes, the fuel of all of us**. And the pleasure of living and sharing the achievements and conquests already reached assure me that dreams do come true. In case you´re looking for something similar, I hope we can help each other.

May we learn to be happy!

A warm friendly hug!

Peace and love to all of you!

Tião Vicente.

01/06/2004

18h29min

Welcome everyone!

From now on, I´ll try to let you know about my main steps on this journey. I hope you like it and that we may be able to do it for old times' sake, even though it´s in a virtual way. The following descriptions are

neither so full of details nor tiring. Rather than that, they will clarify the reader concerning the life style of a Brazilian student and tourist abroad, initially in London. The objective is to tell some adventures, in a light, interesting and fun way.

I will post outings, hints, reflections, news, impressions... I will be brief in all of it. The first postings will show what the day-by-day of travelers abroad is like. The last ones will be a new and intense flight around some of the most sought for destinations on this Planet.

I arrived here, in London, on the 23rd day of September 2003. On the first six months, I seized the time to **study, work and get to know** this cosmopolitan capital. Here you find cultures from all the nations of the world. Something fantastic! You can know a little of each region of this so diverse planet here. And many things from other planets... Hahaha... Experiences of a unique life, I have no doubts that everyone should have similar opportunities.

There were so many things already experienced in the last eight months that I don´t even know how to start writing. Hum... Ok. I´ll start showing what life is like here, after some months away from home, giving you some **notion** of how **millions** of Brazilians live abroad. Then, I´ll talk about the trips that I´ll take, trying to give a "**ride**" to anyone interested on these adventures.

I also highlight that many of the wanderers whose visa expired (who remain abroad **illegally**) cannot go through borders, but this is not my case. Initially, I had a tourist visa, with an express prohibition to work. And, after eight months, I got the student one, which said nothing about work.

I hope you use this site and abuse of it in a relaxed and fruitful way. I am grateful to you for this communication. I hope you like the news that will follow and that through them you may notice what the life of a traveler abroad is like, either the one that dedicates his/her experience to studying, or to working, or to having fun, or to observation, or to all these possibilities together. Pay attention to the differences between the experience of a

tourist and the one of a **learner**. Notice how diverse the experiences are of those who travel to **only one place** compared to those who get to know **several places**. Identify the peculiarities of a trip which takes days, in relation to another that takes weeks and those we wander about for months... Above all, **feel motived to hit the road but focused!** It may seem futile, but it isn´t: do not forget to focus. Because if you don´t, you might get into trouble.

All in all, I am having fun and learning as well. I will share whatever I can, so that my achieved existential **qualifications** may be **collective ones**. I really hope I can share that with you!

Hugs to you all, I miss you very much, Tião Vicente.

05/06/2004

17h38min

Good afternoon here and good morning there!

During this week, I planned the month of June, especially about trips. Yesterday, Friday, I went to **CANTERBURY**, a small city, with 46 thousand inhabitants, known for being the hometown of many English poets and writers. As many other towns I´ve already visited, Canterbury is beautiful and organized. Many parks and gardens provide a romantic and peaceful atmosphere to the population. It´d be great if Brazilian rulers had the same worries about the quality of life of the inhabitants of our country. Next week, on the 8th, I am traveling 12 hours by bus to Amsterdam and I´m staying there until the 11th. What an adventure! I´m going to Bristol on the 14th. I´m going to Birmingham on June 18th. On the 22nd and 23rd I´ll be visiting Dublin, in Ireland. And, finally, on June 28th, I´m going to Cambridge. As for this one, the contrast and comparison with the already visited and loved Oxford are very much expected.

By the way, I have been using my spare time at the hotel where I work, usually at night, when reception is deserted, to write about my

impressions and emotions concerning the photos I´ve taken. Much is the information entering our minds every day, and it is so risky to leave only memory to keep all the remembrances of each photo. Therefore, I´m taking notes at the back of each one of them.

Curiously, I decided to take pictures of some landscapes with two fingers of mine making the gesture of "love and peace". These are supreme feelings that are worth to be registered. I imagine that, afterwards, as life goes by, I´ll take a look at these photos again and I´ll be taken by such feelings once more. An example of that is the afternoon I spent at the pier in **BRIGHTON**, a beach close to London. The photo that I took there is simple, but it gives me an inexplicable well-being. There was a paradisiac view, which served as an inspiration to my dreams on the pier itself. I lost the notion of space and time when I slept, curled up on a bench, put to sleep by the wind and by the singing of several birds. It was a wonderful afternoon:

This morning, I went to the **Portobello fair**. The biggest antique fair of Europe! Similar to the Camden fair, it is impressive. There, you find the most exotic and unexpected products. From samurai swords and magic lamps to the famous English magic mushrooms – which are legal here. By

the way, I think that after eating those mushrooms many people have their wishes granted by the genie... Hahaha... That is it. Tomorrow is my day off, so I´ll spend the day in parks. Luckily – very luckily! –, it will be sunny in London, allowing some sunbathing and football. Here, for a Brazilian, there´s always "room" for one more. Even for me, a lousy player! Hugs, miss you, Tião Vicente.

07/06/2004

12h36min

Speak up, "Brazuca"! Yesterday, in the afternoon, I played football with some guys exiled from Tibet. Imagine the spectacle... But the talk about the independence of this nation was worth it. At night, soon after a delicious dinner, with beer and wine, I played football (again!) with friends of my friend Paco (a Spanish mate who´s lived in Ijuí for years. He was the son of dearest Carmen Granell – my virtual European mother, laughing...). The game took place in a field that was under a flyover. Guess who kicked the ball twice over the fence??? Yeah... My skills are still the same. Paco, who has been away from Brazil for years, is still playing well. He would be a great player if he didn´t support Internacional football team. Such a pity, but nobody is perfect, right? Hahaha...

But speaking of playing with people from Tibet, I´ve found very fascinating **to know different minds**, with the most diverse styles. And I feel that, by knowing the differences, I start to think differently. For example, by observing people in parks, I´ve learned better values, such as the ones I´ll mention now. See if you agree.

I think there are smart, intelligent or genius people, as well as there are those who aren´t neither that smart, nor that intelligent nor that genius. There isn´t such a thing as a stupid person, nor perfect. They are all ignorant, in a greater or smaller degree. They are all smart, intelligent or genius, in a greater or smaller degree.

The difference from one to the other might be on the nature or on the personality of each one of us, but the education, the opportunities and the efforts (that are related to an individual nature) are certainly essential. People say men are a product of their genetic background, of their environment and of the opportunities they seize.

In this sense, there is no sad, unhappy and dissatisfied genius. Thus, if the nature of men has happiness as a reason, it is illogical and unthinkable that knowledge, geniality and wisdom become strongly determining factors to suffering. In this case, the problem might be in the processing of the acquired data. Except in tragic situations, of course, geniuses never stop being humans.

Therefore, smart and intelligent people only evolve to geniality when they discover happiness, becoming – not only being – happy people. And most importantly: without taking happiness from others. In this perspective, happiness might be protected with a kind of rational immunization. In other words, rationalizing to understand and, thus, suffer less. When there is a chance, I´ll develop this idea better.

Hugs, Tião Vicente.

14/06/2004

13h36min

Hey there... Believe me... **AMSTERDAM** is... ...crazy, something you can´t miss! Very different from what I had seen till now. On one hand, many drugs, prostitutes, stores and theaters specialized on the topic of "sex". And gardens, museums and schools about marijuana as well. On the other hand, modern and old buildings amid dozens of canals full of flowers, which give to this city full of trees a romantic atmosphere. The main means of transport of this population of very beautiful women are very old bicycles, as for the police, they have these vehicles with gears.

As if it weren´t enough, the Vincent Van Gogh museum, Anne Frank´s house and Ajax stadium – forgive me my fellow companions who root for Grêmio, but I went to see the competitor of the final of the World Interclub Championship of 1995 – are among the main touristic attractions that I visited.

The legalization of drugs is an alternative to face one of the biggest problems of today. For those who are interested, a marijuana garden in Amsterdam:

Adventurous backpacker and almost penniless, I took some apples, bananas, oranges and biscuits in my bag. And I spent 4 days like this. I did not buy a single sandwich or mushroom. I missed my "gluey" rice, pasta and potatoes so much.

The cheapest hostel that I found was a Christian one, where I justified my absence for the discussion of the Bible at 7a.m. On the 10th, I followed the voting for the European Parliament, noticing the great militancy of the Green Party. In the United Kingdom, the electors demonstrated in the ballot boxes that they do not approve of the alliance between Bush and Blair. Fortunately! The European Parliament is a little bit more left wing.

On my way back, as it was on the first leg of the trip, it took me 12 hours by bus, including the wonderful crossing of the English Channel by ferry boat, as well as the stop overs in Belgium and in the countryside of Holland. Curiously, on my way there, I had the very pleasant company of a Chinese goddess. Whereas on the way back, I shared half of the seat with an ultra-obese lady, since only her side of the seat was not enough to accommodate all that fluffiness... Translating the Dutch's own definition, Amsterdam is a hell of a city!

Greetings, Tião Vicente.

19/06/2004

18h51min

Good morning!!

In the past week, I worked, slept a lot and went to school every day, except Friday, when I was in **BIRMINGHAM**. I liked the downtown area of this city, which was the only part that I visited. I saw an exhibition about the culture and the cinema from India in the museum and art gallery. Marvelous!! Have you ever heard of **Bollywood**? I don´t think so. I confess I had never heard of it either. This happens probably because, in Brazil, the movies from the United States smother all the others, including the Brazilian ones. As I was saying, I saw a musical and got fascinated by the Indian dances and traditions.

The curiosity of going to India grew even bigger. But I guess it won´t be on this journey. It deserves an **exclusive trip**. As well as China and Japan, it is a country full of traditions and peculiarities, which require a lot of time and money to visit them. Their society, with millenary traditions, cannot be explored in a few days. Besides, doing programs off the beaten track has a high price.

This morning, I woke up to go to the park close by just to sunbathe, something rare in London. When I left home, the sky was completely blue.

However, in a 5-minute walk towards the park, clouds came from all over. It almost rained. Cutting the story short, I went back home and went back to sleep until midday. Then, I woke up and went out to play football. After that, I came here, to my place of work, in a hotel. These days, the Euro Cup 2004 is taking place. All the games are on TV, like the one that has just ended, the Czech Republic versus Holland. What a game! The Czechs started losing 2 x 0 and turned the tables to 3 x 2! Here, the TV channels show the games even on prime time, which in Brazil is occupied by soap operas.

Before I forget to mention, it is important to talk a bit about the difference between **safety** in Europe and in Brazil. In our yellow and green country, we know that there´s a lot of crime, misery and violence, but we can only realize about the chaos in which we live in when we leave this hell. For those who don´t know it yet, it is possible to imagine big cities like Porto Alegre, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo with no grids, electric fences and padlocks? Well then, comparing it to Brazil, Europe is calmer.

Most houses have a door directly to the street and a lawn separated from the sidewalk only by a beautiful wooden white fence. The appearance of a real house, not a penitentiary! I highlight: one of the best sensations that I feel walking around the streets here is to be able to distract myself without taking the risk of being robbed. Also without having to wonder if the person who is passing by is a thief. To stroll around after dark without being so much afraid is a great social wealth. It is so good to assume that the other pedestrians are kind and polite people – rather than creatures who search for an opportunity to do bad things.

Another point of extreme relevance so as to lead a calm life is the option that many Europeans seem to make: as the currency is strong and the purchasing power is high, several people choose to work part time, usually 4 to 6 hours nonstop a day. They also live close to the place of work and have the remaining of the day free. They get to live a comfortable, but not luxurious life.

Actually, the luxury they have is to "buy" their own free time. Isn´t it great? If the 24 hours of just one day is excellent already, I presume that

the whole life of these people is like paradise! Unless one person, with free time, doesn´t feel good on their own company or has no creativity to make the most of the time between the strikes of a clock.

Comparing this to the not so distant time when **working hours** were superior to 12 hours a day (and those "victims" had the same 24 hours a day!), we´re going through a tremendous improvement. I just hope we can still reach the stage of development in which, to produce goods and provide the necessary services to society as a whole, each human being would have to work, at the most, 4 hours a day. Moreover, it would be done out of free will – and not the necessity of having a dignified and comfortable life. How about that?

By the way, I´d like to add it is in this line of reasoning that it seems crazy to me that a professional class which is already well paid would ask for a salary raise rather than a reduction in their working hours. What many self-employed professionals do also strikes me: even when they already have a dignified and comfortable life, why not "buy" time for themselves, friends and family, instead of buying new material assets? I wonder if there´s a lack of existential reflection to these people or is it as if I had come from another planet and am I too naïve and immature?

Anyways, as long as my "comfortable" life doesn´t come, I´ll work during the whole weekend... Hahaha.... On Monday I´ll get set to go to Dublin, in Ireland, on Tuesday. Once I´m back, I´ll talk about my stay there. This Sunday, June 20th, I´ll be online for a chat at a room of Terra, city of Ijuí, between midday and 1p.m., as well as between 6 and 7pm. Brazil Time! Whoever misses me, show up there. Here it is quite hot, above 30º. And there is no air conditioner, as a cold country like England "only" has central heating (almost in every building).

Have a nice weekend everyone, Tião Vicente.

24/06/2004

19h55min

Hello!

This week I visited **DUBLIN**. Even though it is summer time, I was unlucky to be received with rain, strong wind and cold weather all the time. But let´s be honest: with just a few exceptions, among them the ones referring to the writer James Joyce, the Irish capital has its pubs as the main touristic attractions. Hence, the climate did not prevent me from knowing the best points!

To begin with, I went to the current factory and also the museum of Guinness Brewery, which produces more than 10 000 000 mugs of beer daily. After checking its 250 years of history, including all the production process, the visit ended on the top floor of the factory, with a long tasting, in a comfortable panoramic bar. For a bohemian like me, this thing only would be worth the trip. But I also went on for long walks around the streets. There I felt the typical Irish ambiance, already mentioned above.

Dublin is the city with the highest number of pubs and bars on the Planet. Some of them, mainly the ones located on the famous Temple Bar area, were checked by me. One better than the other! The oldest one, still working, was opened in the distant year of 1198!! As you can see, I got to know the main aspect of the culture of Ireland: due to the constant bad weather, I went to pubs to drink, sing, dance...

In a bar of the Irish capital, I talked to an old man who was about 70 years old. The talk came up because we met three times on the line, waiting for a pint – a mug of half a liter of beer. Both of us drinking with much excitement! When I commented about their culture, he said that, despite being rather cold, one of their great pleasures is to make good friendships. We went on chatting, and, after some other pints, we came to the conclusion that the world would be much better if human beings got better friendships, if they made efforts to become good friends. What about that? A toast to

good friendships, a fortune that everyone can have!

Today, a Thursday, I watched the "great" match between Portugal and England, first class **football**. Although I lived in London and was wearing an English t-shirt, I rooted for the Portuguese winners. Especially for Felipão, the hero of the Brazilian fifth World Cup championship, and who is now the coach of Portugal. Regular, stoppage time and penalties! My heart is in my mouth with so much emotion! If it were a match of Brazil, I guess I would´ve had a heart attack. I bet the "Portuguese" will be the champions. In the meantime, I keep on enjoying the great games of Euro Cup 2004. Interesting: it is hard to go to the stadiums to enjoy the biggest matches here. The tickets are mostly for members, and the remaining ones are usually sold for very high prices or reserved to those who enroll in a line that takes months.

On the next Saturday, the 26th, it will be the time to celebrate my 21st birthday!!! I will miss all my family and friends like never before, I know... But London promises to compensate me.

Good luck to all those there who are finishing the academic semester.

Hugs, miss you, Vicente.

Obs.: yesterday, the 23rd, I completed 9 months of my journey.

01/07/2004

15h23min

Buenas, South-Americans!! My birthday was celebrated with lots of beer and with my first Londoner barbecue (steak on the grill, by the way). Thanks for the greetings and for the gifts! Next year, we´ll have a party twice as big, in Ijuí, to compensate for this year´s! On Sunday, I played football on Hyde Park, in the rain. On Monday, I visited the city of **CAMBRIDGE**, which, as the example of the already visited Oxford, all in all, is an ultra-structured university. I talked to some students, but I did not manage to convince anyone to transfer to UNIJUÍ, where I study there in

Brazil. It must´ve been my weak persuasion power...

On Tuesday, I went out to celebrate the first month of work (and salary!) of Carlos, a Colombian friend (who I met in a park, playing football, as many of my friendships here, especially among people from countries with "less cold" cultures). The Londoner night has countless mysteries and temptations. On the day after, you cannot believe your own memory. These youngsters... On Wednesday, I progressed a lot on the search of a quick course on the judicial area. The plans are to begin in September. I´ve made lots of efforts to accomplish that, but I confess that it hasn´t been an easy task.

Today, a Thursday, after leaving school, I was again a guinea pig in a hairdresser´s school. Since I´ve discovered this institute, where apprentices cut hair for free (the savings with each cut is the same as a hostel room rate), I´ve been a "victim" of the students. This time, as a present to myself for my birthday, I had my head shaved with a No. 0 razor (an old wish, that I wouldn´t have done in Brazil). However, before that haircut, I had at least 10 different styles experimented, from Mohican to skin head. A great fun, which lasted about 2 hours. All the cuts were registered in photos. I couldn´t believe it. But, one day, I´ll show them to you.

Has the Copa América already started? How is the national team doing? Still talking about football, how is the Brasileirão 2004 coming along? Is Grêmio still the leader, or have I read the paper upside down? (Hahaha...) Finally, I don´t like to gossip, but isn´t the new couple, M. Jagger´s daughter and J. Lennon´s son, interesting? If the gene combination works, we might have a pop-rock king!

Gauchos and *gauchas*, from everywhere, hugs from your friend Tião Vicente.

11/07/2004

14h59min

What´s up, mates?

As I listen to the collection "Canto e Encanto Nativo" (from the ones I know, it is the one which better selected the *gauchas* regional songs), I will update the news. Recently, there´s nothing special. I've been working a lot in this hotel, which sometimes looks like the "Hotel California", from the band *The Eagles*. You know the lyrics, right? How wonderful, but you can´t get out of there... In my school, I have a new teacher. She´s just like Rita Lee! Probably even more alternative. In London, just another figure... And she is very competent. I´m enjoying the classes. I believe she doesn´t have a more valued job just because of her **looks**. I mean, this kind of prejudice doesn´t exist only in small cities...

Cristina, also known as Kika, the girl from Ijuí whom I share the flat with, is leaving on the 14th. Repeating what already happened before, when other friends went back home, I feel as if a part of me is going along with them. I never thought I would miss home so much, even with the accomplishments of this journey being so wonderful. Never mind. Just a few more months and my mission will be equally accomplished.

My friend Kika, it was great to have shared these more than 5 months with you. You can be sure our friendship will only grow. I hope we have other opportunities to open the map of Planet Earth and plan adventures. Good luck and success on your return to our homeland! On the 15th, I'll wait for my friend Sérgio Callai at the airport. He'll live at Kika's place. The Ijuienses are "ruling" the capital of the United Kingdom. Hahaha... Sérgio: you are very welcome! Congrats for your courage on also facing this adventurous challenge. I´m already celebrating the fact another human being has perceived the world is ours and we´ve got to know it!

Last night, my friend Paco and I went to a musical with Lorna Luft, Judy Garland's daughter. I had never heard of them. Her mother was a

singer and an actress, and, among other performances, was a member of the cast of "The Wizard of OZ", this one very famous. The musical is all about the mother's life, narrated by her daughter. To Jazz lovers, it is worth it. Especially for me, since I got the tickets for free, and they cost approximately 180 each! After the musical, we went to a bar. First-class Rock n' Roll, live. And the **beer**, even though it was "hot" (average temperature), was quite good. After the 3rd one then, just forget about it... Laughter... I don´t know if the difference is in the ingredients or if it is in the fermentation, but this beverage from here is better than the ones produced in Brazil. There, the beers have to be drunk very cold for the mouth glands not to feel the bad quality...

Today, a Sunday, I´m working the whole day, and I will also do so in the following weeks. It´s necessary to save some money to travel... By the way, on the next posting, I hope to be announcing new trips.

A warm hug, Tião Vicente.

18/07/2004

13h05min

Good morning, Southern Hemisphere!

Before I started communicating through this site, many friends used to complain that I was not sending any news. They would say everyone was curious to know what was happening around here. Therefore, I started writing on this blog. I´ve been sending news every week, although I haven´t received as many news from there.

For sure, this is not the best means of communicating, but this is the way I found to share my adventure with all of you. Only those who are here, so far and busy, know that it´s impossible to write an e-mail to each and every friend. Nevertheless, I´ve noticed that most of those who used to complain about the lack of communication are not accessing even this simple site. Thus, I ask: is anyone reading the news I´ve been sending or isn´t this

blog, created for you, being visited?

Soon, the "homing pigeon" Kika will be taking dozens of photos to Ijuí. Whoever wants to see them, show up at my folk´s home. Kika, thanks a lot! Dad, mom and Marilia, don´t worry. I don´t think there will be many curious friends that will give you some hard work... Hahaha...

On the weeks to come, I´ll define the days I´ll be in Germany for the *Oktoberfest*!

I´ve been thinking of going back to Brazil next February. Does anybody know when carnival will take place? See you next week, Tião Vicente.

23/07/2004

17h34min

Hello! How are you?

As a reply to my latest posting, I got some e-mails saying that the blog is being visited. So, my impression of inutility of this space was wrong. Not so bad. By the way, I invite everyone to feel free to write as well, since you only have to click on "comments". Our communication would be complete...

If Carnival 2005 will be really on 8/02, I´ll be in Ijuí around 28/01. Before that, I´ll make a stop of about 7 days in Cuba. Also, my **short courses** in some universities here have been confirmed. There will be 2 in September, one in October, and another one in November. And a longer one, of 10 weeks, starting on 7/10 and ending on 9/12. They will be in the areas of Sociology and Law, Criminology, British Judiciary System and English Criminal Law. I hope I can handle the content and the pay! Actually, it isn´t just in Brazil that private education is extremely expensive...

This has been the saddest and most difficult week since I got here. I will only write the good news, even if, at this exact moment, I´m wetting the keyboard with the tears that are falling because of the **loss** of my dearest

grandma. Let´s move forward, once there´s nothing else to be done. Is there?

Granny Maria, my dear, it is very sad that we couldn´t say goodbye. But we´ll surely see each other in Heaven. A dedicated wife and mother of 11 children, I know that helping others ended up being your greatest happiness in your terrestrial adventure. And, without a doubt, my victorious journey is a consequence of your efforts. So, I hope these joyful rides keep on making you happy. I was still hoping to be able to make your dream come true and take you to know Italy! Who knows, in the months to come, when I visit the land of our ancestors, you "will be" with me... So be it. Kisses full of tears from the grandson who loves you so and will eternally regret the fact I was not living close to you in the last months of your life. May God be with us all, Vicente.

30/07/2004

19h58min

What´s up, Latin America?! What have you been doing? Making the most of the end of the **July break**? For you it is a short rest, but here, at this time, the longer (or less short?) summer vacation is taking place...

Last Saturday, after the already usual "match" in a park in the north of London, we´ve had lots of beer and a good chat. With Brazilian, Colombian, Italian and Austrian **partners**, the night ended only after sun rise, on Sunday! And the tiny detail: I´d work from midday onwards. As you can imagine, I had 2 hours and a half of sleep and my body was already up again. I cured the hangover at work, doing 20 hours non-stop, until the morning of Monday. Nevertheless, as always, I had the right of some naps during the night (as tired as I was, I actually hibernated, let it be said). I went back home on Monday morning, skipping class, and then my body reencountered my mind. The two of them slept until the afternoon, when they got up, took a shower, ate something and went back to work together. Such a waste! Laughter...

Still on Monday, I shaved my head myself for the first time. I used my shaver and two mirrors. My dad and my grandpa together do not beat my noble baldness. I feel more than good, without having to **hide** it with my own hair. It´s a feeling of purity!! Have you considered that? Perhaps, you´d like to join us...

On Wednesday, together with Sérgio, an Ijuiense as well, I visited Leeds Castle, known as the loveliest castle in the world! The place is really amazing. Isolated in the center of a lake, it is an old shelter for nobles and for the royalty. Surrounded by beautiful parks, caves, gardens, labyrinths and a zoo of birds, the castle was used until the mid-70's, when it was transformed into a foundation. All in all, it was a day of dreams... I´ll show you the photos when I´m back. And those who want to have an idea of such beauty can access www.leeds-castle.com.

Tomorrow, Saturday, there will be something else going on. The partners are the same from last week and the party will be in Camden Town, the place with the greatest **diversity of human beings** of Europe. From 0 to 10, it's 11! On Sunday, the 1st of August, I´ll be online from 5 in the afternoon (in Brazil) onwards. When you can, do write telling the news from there as well!! And what about the campaign in the USA? Are you following it? Not that it is a consolation, but it is not only Brazil that has had bad candidates... Well, take a peek at the castle I told you about:

Grant! Have a nice weekend everyone, Tião Vicente.

08/08/2004

14h41min

Happy Father's Day!!!

Are you almost freezing in the south of Brazil? Here it is still very hot, once, in August, we´re still in the **European summer**... Listening to the tangos by Astor Piazzolla and by Carlos Gardel I'll tell you the news from here. Afterwards, I hope you send some from there too, alright? On August 2nd, I visited the National Library of the United Kingdom. It is huge, well organized and cozy, and there was an interesting exhibition of the Beatles and of other British writers, poets and artists taking place. As for the boys from Liverpool, I found some drafts of lyrics, non-published versions of some pieces and many stories. I got so thrilled that I started reading a book about them and the context that surrounded them, a "fictitious reality".

On the 3rd, a newspaper, which is distributed for free in London, was giving a pint of beer for every reader. Of course I didn´t get a pile of

newspapers, for free... Laughter... On the 4th, I slept. Nothing else. Hahaha... On Thursday, I seized the summer and sunbathed in a park close to where I live. Now, I am sunburnt. After, I went to the cinema to see the drama "21 Grams" and, at night, I got a leave from my boss to go to Paris, Prague and Scotland. This week, I´ll try to define it all. From 18/09 to 03/10, there is the *Oktoberfest* in Munich, in Germany. Is anyone willing to accompany this "*skorado na copa* – lad leaning on the bar counter"?

On Saturday, I went to a park to have a **barbecue** with friends (hamburger on the grill. But it was very good). This morning, I called to my grandpa´s house. All the tribe was gathered there, eating a great Brazilian style barbecue of buffalo. Ah! I miss home so much... I´ve just bought 2 liters of ice-cream to face the heat and the boredom of working here at the hotel. I read that the "Motorcycle Diaries", film about Che Guevara, is about the man, and not the myth. It sounds interesting, especially for Backpackers. As for football, the bad performance of Inter has proved that Joel Santana – coach of the "Colorado" – has been the best "Gremista" hiring lately... Hahaha...

I´ve been forgetting to tell you that some days ago I went to a piano bar here in London. The atmosphere is quite known: pleasant dim light, surround and live music, with the piano leading the repertoire. Comfortable tables to have a good chat, in nice company, tasty beer, all set to please bohemians. In my opinion, it isn't perfect just because there's too much cigarette smoke around. And thus, the non-smokers are also obliged to smoke. Well, intoxicated by the environment of the piano bar, "eventually minus ¼", as a *gaucho* would say, I jotted down on a napkin my feelings. It is another trip thought:

I feel alive in a Piano Bar
Music with life, good talk and booze
That's my home
That's a life style
Live and love

It is a fine celebration for father´s day! Tião Vicente.

22/08/2004

15h06min

Bon Jour!!

How are you? All connected to the **Olympic Games** of Athens 2004? How wonderful that all the nations are meeting to celebrate such healthy tradition. Lucky are those who can travel and accompany an event like this. Practicing ports means quality of life. It's a pity that Brazil neglects other modalities rather than football. We would be able to compete among the most prepared delegations! Again: Brazil, a country of the future...

And our neighbor Hugo Chávez has won once again, for the despair of the USA! I got pleased with the result. Choose the lesser of two evils. After all, I wonder if there are electors who vote on the best candidate. I have the impression that we are all obliged to vote on the "least worst"! We choose a representative of the people, ours, who, when elected, is not among us and starts representing the interests of his new context. Power transforms people. And it is usually for worse. Hence, more critical than the life of the elector is just the lives of those who cannot vote at all...

Last week I was in **PARIS**. I went through the **tunnel that crosses the Ocean (Eurotunnel),** an unbelievable construction, and came back by ferry boat on the English Channel. These were absolutely lovely days. A cozy, romantic, clean city, full of restaurants, cafés, parks, museums, theaters, attractions and, therefore, incredibly sought for by tourists.

There were so many things to see in so little time that, due to so much enthusiasm, my body didn´t even feel any sleep or tiredness. I woke up at 7 in the morning and went back to the hostel after mid-night every day.

I visited all the main touristic attractions. Among them, the Notre Dame Cathedral, the Eiffel Tower, the Arc of Triumph, the Louvre Museum, The Pompidou Art Center, the Montmartre area, the Pantheon Area, the Moulin Rouge, the Gardens of Luxemburg, the Hotel des Invalides, the

Champs Elysee Avenue, the cemetery where Jim Morrison and Chopin are buried, the Picasso Museum. It is the most comfortable city that I´ve ever visited. In every trip I´ve broken new hyper positive records, that's so good. Picture this landscape. Use your imagination. Close your eyes and breathe the Parisian air.

Among so many other differences, London has got a vast **cultural and cosmopolitan life**. However, after some months in the city, the attractions start to extinguish. Paris, on its turn, has the environment itself as the best to offer. What I mean is, the British capital seems to be a place to be visited, whereas the French one, with a better quality of life, a place to live in.

It wasn´t all absolutely marvelous just because the pride of the French in making their language the most used on the Planet still remains. Even though the whole world acknowledges English as the "universal language", the old generations of France spread arrogance when they get offended by those who don´t speak French. And it gets worse: even in international areas, as well as in museums, monuments and other touristic attractions, many times, there isn't

even one explanation or guidance phrase in English! After all, it is a luxury that the most visited city of the Planet can have. Patience. When the world discovers Ijuí, everything will be different... Hahaha...

So many things I could tell that only one book wouldn´t be enough. At least 100 photos were taken all together (printed). Soon, together with the ones from Prague, Scotland and German, I will send all of them home.

So, what to say on just one posting on this blog? That's why I see myself super enthusiastic to write a novel every day more. Perhaps, after all these adventures, some good ideas will come up to start it. It'd be a new dream come true. The most difficult aspect is the financing of this "opportunity".

Next week I´m going to Prague, in the Czech Republic. Some say it is the most beautiful capital of Europe. Let´s see.

Greetings, Tião Vicente.

30/08/2004

17h31min

Good evening, lads!

I've heard that you've been having sunny days in the winter there, is it true? This is such a present. Here, when this cold season arrives, the rain and the snow predominate. Now, in London, the **summer begins to say goodbye**. Today, I´ll even turn on the central heating here in the hotel where I work. And we´re just in August...

And what about the Olympic Games? What did you think of it? We got 4 gold medals. But it could've been 40, don't you agree? I hope governors wake up and notice there´s education and quality of life in sport, beginning to provide the necessary infrastructure for us to be able to develop in this sense.

But let´s go straight to the point. My visit to **PRAGUE** was nothing but perfect, marvelous. In an adventurous trip, I spent 24 hours by bus to my final destination. The path was done through the Eurotunnel and, after, through Belgium, France, Germany and the Czech Republic. The difference of colors in nature between one place and the other is interesting. The Germans have given great importance to the environment. There I observed that a good part of the lands is reforested and there is a total selection in garbage collection, not to mention the use of solar energy.

The capital of the Czech Republic has extremely old buildings and the cultural wealth as its main attractions:

Performances like these are common on the Czech **streets and squares**. Prague has been the stage of great joys. An old city, with simple, intelligent and polite people. Arts and sports are always so present in the life of the population that going to an opera, for example, seems as natural as a Brazilian going to a football game! And it was super interesting to get to know a former communist country a little more.

As always, long walks were the chosen means to know the city. I saw many buildings with at least 1000 years of age, the Charles Bridge, full of sculptures and artists, the Jewish District, the Communist Museum, and the House of Franz Kafka (writer). I also visited monuments and squares that were settings of Revolutions, mainly during the Cold War, a clock that works according to the Stars, the Castle where the Czech governors have been working, among others.

The **Hostel** in which I stayed was just like the shelter of an army battalion: 70 people in a big dormitory (even though it charged the usual price – less than half the cost of the simplest hotels. What I mean, it was an exception to the rule, once these lodging places are usually cheap, but they "only" have around 5 people per room). With noise during 24 hours, I was obliged to have the delicious Czech beer every night, only to be able to sleep. Laughter...

Curiously, did you know these people are the ones who drink most beers? That's perhaps why the Scots are busy with whisky! Anyway, I hope a research like this has been done to discover problems in public health... By the way, the night in Prague is quite busy. The best place, of the several I had been to, was a club of five floors, all enormous, each one with a different musical style. It was full of people coming from every corner of the Planet. It wasn't a costume party, but it looked like one... Hahaha... It's a pity I have done this all by myself. With some old friends, the Planet would be in "order and progress".

A new funny story: I went to a bar with a Chilean acquaintance, who I had met at the hostel where I was staying. We didn't want to go to a restaurant for tourists, but a place for Czech natives. Mainly to get to know their environment better and also to pay less, of course. Well, we got to the little bar, full of people having lunch. There weren't so many youngsters in the place. We tried to **speak English**, but nobody understood us. Nor the Chilean nor I spoke any phrase in their Language. To make matters worse, the menu only had numbers, solely with the ingredients of what each dish contained. There weren't even any photos of the foods.

Who can guess what happened? Well, we decided that´d be cool to try to communicate through signs. We tried to, but it didn't work out. The couple who was the owner laughed, spoke their Language, we spoke English, we pointed at the names of a dish, to another, but we couldn't understand each other. Thus, we decided to ask for number 1. There came a kind of biscuit with milk. We had it, but it wasn't what we really wanted. We asked for 2 and 3, which were also kinds of snack. Due to the fact we were quite hungry, we devoured it all. The owners, some people at the bar and we laughed a lot. When we asked for number 4, everybody laughed out loud. Everybody. We were the center of attention of all those who were at the place. On the fourth attempt, came a dish of food: Fish with sauce, with bread and a kind of rice with roasted flour. Quite delicious. More than pleased, we shook the hands of the owners and of some smiley ones that were close by, we paid the bill and left the place with everybody who was there clapping!!!

The next trip will be to Scotland. On the days to come, I´ll tell you about this other adventure as well. Till then, send some news and keep in touch through this site that is being constructed to share with you a bit of these deeds!

And the elections, how are they coming along?

Hugs to you all, Tião Vicente.

12/09/2004

17h10min

Seizing the week of the nation, I want **Order and Progress**!

And what has each one of us done about it to do so? Have we really been the change we want to see in the world? Or haven't we been better than hypocrite sheep? Let us not speak, but let us do it. Let´s criticize the work of politicians, choose better our governors, but contribute daily to improve our nation. Unfortunately, only voting and paying the countless

taxes are not enough. By the way, **when will we have the right of electing concrete projects, on the same way we´re obliged to vote in candidates?** We should be entitled to choose even the technicians responsible for carrying out these constructions. I think that only like this power would really come from the people and the world would become a better place. Especially if reelection (life tenure of the powerful) ended. May this day arrive soon! Amen.

SCOTLAND has a brave heart indeed. Its historical struggle for auto-independence contaminated me. The largest city Glasgow, despite being interesting as well, has not touched my heart as Edinburg has. With a castle at the top of a volcanic mountain, where the center was formed, the city has 450.000 inhabitants, a vast cultural life, very beautiful and antique architecture, several green areas, it is safe and it shelters polite people. For my liking, it´d be perfect if it didn´t have a cold and rainy climate. It wouldn´t even have to have whisky. Admire the castle of Edinburgh:

From London to Edinburg, I traveled for 5 hours by **train** (another tip: it´s interesting to experiment a "bullet train", which rides with the speed of a plane... But the trains which ride slowly cost less and let you see the landscapes

better...). During the trip, I tried to imagine what our Brazil would be like, in case it had efficient train transportation. If I were the President, this would certainly be a priority. Who knows... Maybe one day? Of course, I´m referring to the rail road efficiency! Anyway, as my name is Vicente and I´ve lived all my life as a "vice", it is possible that one day I will assume the position... Laughter...

For those who already know them or to those who are interested in checking them on the map, I went to the following regions: Highlands, Inverness, Glencoe, Braveheart Country Area, Lochs, Stirling and Castles. All in all, I saw breathtaking scenarios. Among many mountains and lakes, I saw castles and monuments. I almost couldn´t believe my eyes, which didn´t get to see Nessie. By the way, the "Monster of Loch Ness" seems to be at the bottom of whisky bottles, as well as so many other typical tales of this country.

Out of curiosity, the Scottish skirt is a quite similar symbol to the *gaucho* pants nowadays. With the revolutionary spirit (quite beyond the ideals of the Farrapos) the Farroupilha Week (do those who are not "gauchos" know this event?) rises on me, as the heroes Robert the Bruce and William Wallace used to say, long live the sons of Scotland! They really had a brave heart...

It was a memorable journey, since I was enchanted by the natural scenarios. I feel that I will repeat it someday. Tomorrow and Tuesday I´ll be participating in a seminar of Law and Sociology, at the University of London. I guess it´ll be super interesting.

As far as I can, I enjoy the music from the old records by Pink Floyd – 'I wish you were here' and 'The dark side of the moon'. Like other **traditional rock bands** from England (another reason to come to London), these "dinosaurs" are really excellent, aren´t they? The next posting will probably be when I´m back from Germany, in the beginning of October. This trip also promises a lot... ...much more than the draught at *Oktoberfest*! *Prost*!

Be inspired by the bravery, freedom and determination in the fight for ideals, like the Scottish people have done for centuries. Live the revolutionary, constructive and transforming spirit!!!

A warm hug, Tião Vicente.

04/10/2004

17h36min

Buenas, Brazilians! Two weeks in **GERMANY** were enough to identify the roots of part of the culture of the German colonies which exist in Brazil. I got to know a good example of an organized society and I had a lot of fun.

The same strong **sense of duty that the German colonies have in Brazil**, in Germany, it gets even clearer. Especially concerning the older generations. As for the youngsters, concerned above all about leisure and quality of life, give the impression that they´ll build an extroverted and informal nation.

Be it in the agile and efficient public transportation or in public and private services provided to the whole population, the German **organization** is something that impresses any Brazilian. It is fun to tell that, a while ago, traveling to another country (different from Germany), I commented with the attendant of a hostel where I was staying that the bed reserved to me seemed that it´d fall apart, since the mortise between the planks and the nails was too loose, it was moving and making noise as well. And the answer was "Yes, yes. Several beds here are like that". Then the bed remained as it was.

But when I arrived in Germany, I got the impression that there everything worked with efficiency and that "nobody would leave for later what could be done sooner". As I entered a room in a hostel in Hamburg, I noticed that the bed in which I´d sleep was making a little noise, so I commented about it with the attendant of the hostel. He asked me to wait, made a phone call and, in 5 minutes, there were three Germans hammering and nailing that bed. They asked me to lie down in the bed and to shake it a lot. Embarrassed

(as a Brazilian, I didn´t want to "bother" those people!), I moved the bed and the mattress and there wasn´t any noise at all. When I thought that the next hammering of the Germans would be on my head (!!), they thanked me for having told them about the problem, wished me a good stay at the hostel and in their country, and left. Quite astonished, I thanked them and lay down in bed thinking that I had just witnessed a small example of the reason why things there work so well!

Such is the effort in organizing systems that, during World War II, Germany got to the point of creating super-structured apparatus to kill human beings, as were the concentration camps! Isn´t it true? And the paradox: how come the most "educated and organized" people supported Hitler?! I like the proverb which says (I don't know a determined author) "normal are the people we don't know very well". But to believe in a lunatic like Hitler! It seems to me there were millions of insanities supporting an immense insanity. Well, unfortunately, it happened. Now, we have to learn from that and to identify who the other insane people are, the ones who are killing people throughout the Planet, through the disguised schemes that were "planted" in people's minds, the idea that the superior race is the one that has capital and that consumes... Where are these **sons of Hitler**?

I visited Hamburg, Münster, Munich, Rothemburg ob der Tauber, Nuremberg and Berlin. I found all of them very interesting, with a lot of history to tell. Although it was officially summer time, I felt very cold. On the first week, I was unlucky since the weather was rainy and the wind was strong. At the Rail Road Station of Hamburg, I almost froze: as we were at the hottest season of the year, I only brought two pairs of trousers, t-shirts and a sweatshirt in my backpack. I sat on a bench, waiting for a train that would leave at around 5 in the morning, and the temperature dropped. I put on all my clothes at once, without leaving any of them in the backpack! And still I felt as if I were inside a fridge. I learned to always carry with me a **coat and an umbrella**...

Much better, on the second week, the sky was only cloudy and with a few sun rays. It was reasonable for a backpacker to walk on the streets, feeling the real environment, observing things and people, the best way to know a city.

In Munich, I met my friends Rafael and Paulo Schneider, who are doing their **doctorate** (and thousands of other Brazilians are also here seizing this valuable opportunity! Scholarships remain available. There´s a lack of people to fill in the simple requirements demanded. Can you believe it?). In this family of musicians, the Brazilian *chorinho* is always a highlight. Also, our German friends Anna and Lidya completed the team on this visit to Munich. I came back from the capital of *Bayer*, host city of *Oktoberfest*, post-graduated in draught and surprised with the growing cosmopolitan culture. Excellent. I even met some Germans who are black.

I thought you would like to see this piece of German art, which was in *Rothemburg*. It shows how humanity develops:

The quality of the beer in this country is really as good as its fame. The opening hours of *Oktoberfest* go from 9am to 11pm. People only dance

on top of the benches or the tables, since there´s no dance floor for doing so. People only drink when seated. People only stand up to go to the toilet or to vomit. It´s a lot of fun to those who get into the spirit of the party, but for the non-bohemians, it´s nothing but a bunch of drunkards. I want to go back there!

There is still a small fragment of the Berlin Wall, today transformed into an art gallery:

It occurred to me that **Arts** have told history. But when will they effectively be the basis for its construction? Don´t you think the world would much better (sensitive, light, good, pure, focused on men and not on the capital) if it were ruled by artists as well?

Lo and behold: it was in Germany that, for the first and only time in my life (as far as I can remember), I saw a smoker throw his cigarette butt in a street trash bin. I had always seen them, outdoors, to throw this garbage (yes, it is garbage!) on the floor, without any shame at all, as if they were fertilizing nature. It was a pity this German person that I saw doing the reported above and a small example of civility was a man. If it were a beautiful German woman, I would have showered her with kisses and hugs,

such is my deception with these people who do things without a "shame thermometer", laughter... I think the same about those who take their pets to defecate in public places and do not clean the place, which it is not the National Congress!

Well, I got to know a beautiful country, a polite and exemplary people, who exercises **citizenship** indeed. I noticed clearly that, today, the Germans are ashamed of their history (Holocaust etc.). It was incredible to see a country with a plentiful structure in 2004, considering that, in 1945, it was in ruins. This made me believe that a better world would soon be possible! I don´t doubt that the Brazilian taxes have been invested there, since, in Brazil, this endless quantity certainly was not invested here... Hahaha... After all, I learned a little more about this curious and fascinating world, diminishing my ignorance and reveling new paths for the secret of being happy. Perfect.

At the moment, I´m curiously following the result of the Brazilian elections. I hope that the **new ideas** have gained space in this society of ours, not yet so ignorant and conservative (and that since 1500 has not worked so well). That is, for centuries, things have not been right, but for centuries as well, people resist to the new suggestions to change. It is ironic and illogical, don´t you agree? I´m sorry I won´t be able to **vote**.

Send some news whenever you can and want to.

Prost! Tião Vicente.

17/10/2004

14h49min

Good Sunday morning!

I have been back from Germany for two weeks already. Since then, I´ve made things happen (why do we always use the expression "have happened"?) a lot.

Primarily, I decided to go back to Brazil in the end of next January. Perhaps on the 28th, when it is my "sponsor" dad´s birthday. Before that, I´m planning to go to Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Italy, the Vatican, Jamaica, Cuba and Buenos Aires. As soon as I define everything, I´ll let you know.

Secondly, on 8/10, I traveled to **PORTSMOUTH**, the city where the writer Charles Dickens was born and which is also famous for being the base of the British Navy. Dickens (whose work is good, but in my humble opinion doesn´t get even close to books by Machado de Assis or by Erico Verissimo) today is praised with more frequency than when he was alive. I wonder if this traditional injustice with the protagonists of important social contributions will ever change. I begin here a new campaign: let´s praise a lot those who we admire.

On the following Friday, I went to **BRISTOL**, another city with a harbor. The two trips were good (and which ones haven´t been?). In this city, the touristic highlight is a suspension bridge, which impresses even the best engineers:

On the first day of class of a course I would take in a university from the English capital, I was granted with disorganization and disrespect. In a

few words, the course was cancelled and nobody told me. And to make matters worse: they got to the point of asking me to wait in the classroom we were supposed to have class, which was empty! Is that possible? As to ease the confusion, not to miss the great opportunity, I ended up enrolling in another course. Imagine if this had happened with an English student in Brazil?? "It´s what happens in the **3rd world**", they would say. Do you want to bet?

I´ve been going out more often at the Londoner night as a farewell already. Great fun. All in all, to tell you the truth, all that I´ve lived here so far has been pure fun... By the way, by the time I´m back, I´ll have had "fun" around here for 1 year and 5 months. And if I was still in doubt whether I should stay here for a few more months until some days ago, now I'm not anymore. I´m compliant I´ll have done enough for my own satisfaction and comply with the fact that, as tired as I´ve been feeling (**having fun is also exhausting!**), the future would be uncertain and not as pleasurable. I mean, I´m already convinced that going back now (January already seems pretty close to me) is the best option. I´m glad I´ve made a decision, even though I´m not a 100% sure. But, after all, when in life are we absolutely and definitely sure about something? When it´s time to make a decision, it seems to me that to be 80% "sure" (whether it is possible to measure that) is enough already.

On Friday night, I saw a protest of students. They were claiming to be against "globalization and the status quo". They were walking under the rain on one of the main streets of London, causing a traffic jam. They were playing the drums and blowing whistles. There were at the most 100 people, watched at least by 10 police cars. They must´ve eaten a burger at a McDonald's or drunk a Coca-Cola after the "Revolution", and probably boasted about their deed with their friends. They left garbage on the streets wherever they passed by. I haven´t heard or read any new ideas, alternatives and suggestions to change the Planet. I am also against many points in globalization which concerns capital and power, but protesting only to fluff, without any organization, without suggesting better alternatives, is

anarchism. Knowledge and organization are paramount even in order to **criticize**. It is just a pity that there are just a few critics who are aware of that.

For those who have asked for photos from here, unfortunately, I inform you that I don´t have anything digital to send you. That is, you´ll have to see them in an album, after I´m back. Interesting: as I feel I´m coming back, I miss them more and more. I think even more of all those who are there.

Please, do write some news, Vice.

31/10/2004

15h47min

Good Sunday morning!

I joyfully confirm my return to Brazil (my enthusiasm, once many of you might think I´m much more useful here, traveling, because only like that I can send some fun news... Hahaha...). I leave London on 10/12. I´ll spend a week in Portugal, where I´ll visit Lisbon, Coimbra and Porto. After that, I´ll go straight to Spain, and stay there for two weeks. There I´ll visit Madrid, Granada, Zaragoza and Barcelona. Afterwards, I´ll pass by Switzerland, for New Year´s eve. There´ll be two nights in Genève and two others in Zurich. If you need me to check any of your bank accounts there, just let me know. I am charging a very low commission. Lol!

As for New Year´s day, I´ll start with a ride of 13 days around Italy. I´ll stroll in Venice, Bologna, Florence, Rome (I won´t forget the Vatican) and Naples. From this last city I´ll go back to London, and then from there, I´ll go to Kingston, Jamaica. On the land of Bob Marley I´ll stay for 5 nights, when I´ll go to Cuba, the land of Fidel and Che, my stop for other 6 nights. After that, I´ll fly to Buenos Aires, with a stopover in Panama City. I will land on the *hermano* territory in the early morning of January 26th. I´ll stay in Argentina for exact two days. Then, I´ll follow the sun path and I´ll catch a

plane to Porto Alegre. There, some family members and friends will be waiting for me, and then they´ll take me to my splendid cradle, in Ijuí, on the 28th, my "sponsor dad´s" birthday. Did you like that? I just try to imagine how big the celebration of my arrival will be, which will coincide with the beginning of Carnival 2005! Now, I just have to keep on organizing this other adventure and it will be thrilling and joyful!

A qualifying detail on New Year´s eve, in Zurich, as well as for the trip in Central America and the Argentinian capital, is that I´ll have the company of my friend Jero (one of the Brazilians of my first Londoner home) who, despite being a *colorado*, is a great guy... Hahaha...

In order to ease the fact we won´t be able to vote in the Brazilian election that is taking place, Sérgio Callai and I visited the English Parliament last Thursday. The debate seemed so civilized to me as the ones from the National Congress. Not much of a difference: **politicians play politics anywhere in the world**, with the peculiarity that in Brazil even the city representatives get astronomical salaries. By the way, Brazilian voters: **let´s demand that on each election we may vote not only on candidates, but also on the elected candidates´ salaries!** After all, if power "emanates" from the people, we´ve got to exert more directly this prerogative of ours. Or lampposts will keep on peeing on dogs... **The powerful ones of today won´t change the world, because they´d lose power... Enough of waiting for them...**

As for voting, I still want to invest my vote on someone with lucidity on the pace of the world on the XXI century. I dream about being able to elect somebody who has a speech like this: "I don´t belong to the party who´s ruling at the moment, nor to the opposition. In a world which needs to end limits, divisions, frontiers, barriers which haven´t been sufficiently justified, which has to unite without prejudice and pre-separations, the pre-vote (order given by the party to their elected members, after an obscure negotiation) is the situation of those who make fun of the power of the people. I´m committed to the ideas and projects chosen by those who elected me". In the case of city´s representatives, congressmen and

senators, there could even be, on their personal pages, polls asking the electoral base about the projects on the agenda of the respective House of Representatives. Advisors, plane tickets, rates, or a recess "to consult the base" wouldn´t be necessary! In the Language of those who have been elected so far: I am the situation of politics and the opposition of graft.

On Friday, also having Sérgio as a company, I went up the 316 steps of the "Monument", built in memory of the big fire that occurred in London in 1666. We even got a certificate, such is the effort to overcome the stairs. If only going down wasn´t tiring already, imagine going up! I didn´t get any information on that, but this attraction must offer the emergency service of a cardiologist.

As on every Sunday, I am working today. London is beautiful. The trees have yellowish leaves, which are starting to fall. The latest days have been cold, but sunny. The green and flowered **parks** remain as being the best thing here. Check this photo that was taken on Hyde Park, which shows the already mentioned beauty of the British parks.

I wish you all a great Sunday afternoon and evening. Hope for the victory of your candidates, fight for your ideals. But don´t forget: **we must start in**

ourselves the change we want to see in the world, as Gandhi has taught us.

Hugs, Vicente.

07/11/2004

16h02min

Hello Brazilians and *gauchos* from everywhere!

I hope everybody is very well. Otherwise, come and travel with me!

Updating the news from here, I report that last week I saw the movie 'Bad Education'. A blockbuster, but I couldn´t detect in its plot any message or meaningful sense. And I didn´t find it very funny. So, I tell you I didn´t think it was one of the best movies ever. Have you seen it already? Did you like it? Have you followed the latest cinema productions? There is always a good idea coming out as a movie. The most difficult thing is for us to find the productions in our taste, once we´re almost always induced to see only the big releases from Hollywood. A technique I´ve been using is to ask people who know me well which movies they think I would like and for which reason. Hence, 80% of the indicated movies that I see are worth the time invested in them already. I am a lover of the big screen each time more.

Winter is closer to London. Sunset is at 4pm and the forecast says that, in December, at 3pm it´ll be night time already. Quite depressing if compared to the sun shining until after 10pm, in high summer.

As my adrenaline is increasing a lot in the weeks of expectation, I´ve been taking care of myself and getting prepared physically and psychologically to be able to handle the 50 days of walks with a knapsack on my back. I´ve learned that the cheapest and most efficient way to know a city is not to go on touristic programs. A young and adventurous option is to **walk exhaustively through the streets**, feeling the environment in which local people live. And that´s what I´ve been doing, always walking from 8 to 10 hours a day. And with the knapsack on my back! A true marathon!

Besides, I´ll face a lot of **snow and ice** in the dead of the European winter contrasting with the Caribbean sauna of 40º C that is expecting me. Therefore, I´ve been eating honey, molasses, garlic, onion, bananas, apples, oranges, kiwis. I have even been having propolis, wine and vitamin C. I have also run 5 days a week in a park pretty close to where I live. As you can see, the preparation to have an organism in its best shape is appraisable (at least by myself, lol...)

I think that last winter was the only time, in my 21 years of age, I didn´t have to take any antibiotics. The merit is all of natural treatments. And from then on, my faith in nature has increased. I already believe in the possibility that our generation may live not less than 130 years, in a healthy way, as long as all necessities of the body and the mind are always attended to. And this belief, based on science predictions, aggregates the diverse types of treatments, summing up the positive points of each one of them.

As we´re speaking of **naturalness**, don´t you also have the impression that this world, in which we live in, full of **artificiality**, influences us to a point we have difficulty in accepting we are part of nature? It´s what it seems to me. There are many artificial things keeping us away from who we really are. We should naturally live well, but we are not doing so like this. For example, to work so much and to earn so little, to breathe in polluted air, to eat preservatives, to drink contaminated water, not to have freedom to walk on the streets anytime anywhere, to be treated as a piece of an immense production machine, to survive in a beautiful huge world, but not to have as many opportunities to seize it, are concrete proofs that we are living in an artificial way. I think the way of life that is imposed to us does not match with human nature! **Human beings: how humane have we been?**

If you agree, how about building a better world, with **equality of opportunities**, closer proximity to nature and more quality of life? I know it´s hard for us to make big actions in this sense. But if each one of us take small steps which are at your reach, they will be joined and, together, result in a great change. And I seize the chance to give my opinion that this "great change" hasn´t occurred so far just because those "small attitudes" haven´t

been taken yet in a sufficient number until the moment. And still, I confess: I always try to do whatever I can, but it is **not all the times that I´m successful in my attempts. Anyway, just the fact of trying already results in a concrete improvement: the positive feeling, of satisfaction, takes hold of me. It is so good to know we did "our part"** (everything that is at our reach)...

I´ve been thinking... After several visits to places around here, I suppose that the capital of the United Kingdom is the European city which, among the big ones, has the biggest number of **homeless people** (and maybe it is the richest one among them, economically speaking!). The crushing majority of them are addicted to some kind of drug, let it be said. It is a different situation from the Brazilian reality, in which the majority of the homeless do not have an option.

A quite interesting fact is that in England, as a tradition from World War II onwards, people use a flower on their chest during the whole month of November. It must represent the respect for the victims and the protest against the lords of wars. Still, the country keeps on bringing about armed conflicts. In this year of 2004, it is attacking Iraq, without much practical disapproval of the population.

I visited the Tower of London yesterday. They are **castles** of a thousand years, which have already been a home for kings and queens, as well as they have hosted an old prison of medieval times. Think about it: must the fact that the same place has been occupied by kings, queens and prisoners be classified as weird or adequate? Anyway, today, the place is a beautiful touristic and historical point. There, among other things, I saw an exhibition of the diamonds of the Crown (of course they were taken to the castle after the prisoners left, hahaha...). The value of these beautiful gems – only that – is unbelievable. I went back home asking myself how come a stone, for so mere beauty, be more valuable than a loaf of bread. What I mean is: we are miserable indeed, in a double sense! This type of value corrodes me, leaves me depressed, scares me and makes me dream with a social change...

Last Friday, I went to **MANCHESTER**, even if only for a few hours. Sérgio went with me, being a partner on a long walk through the city center, a quite interesting place for those who like pedestrian streets and shopping areas.

Walking in the streets and observing the **architecture** of the different places, some ingenious styles draw my attention. I am not a great expert on architectural models, but I like the beauty, creativity and engineering of buildings of the most varied types. Some days ago, here in London, I came across a contrast between modern and antique architecture. One next to each other, inviting us for an inevitable comparison. Which one do you prefer?

I have always liked eating. The visits to my beloved grandma will always have the "banquets" as my best memories. I´ve always regretted the fact that my mom, even though she cooks pretty well, runs away from the stove as much as she can. And I´ve always tried to run away from home whenever my dad tried to adventure himself in the kitchen (laughter...). When I arrived here in London, I was obliged to learn a few things. After so many months away from the comforts of my home, I can say the good side

of all this is that I´ve enjoyed cooking, although not as much my food.

The will to learn one of the small beauties of life has been enthusiastic and relaxing. It is said that eating, since old times, has been one of the supreme moments of human beings. It must be because the need to eat associated to a pleasant company and to the choice of tasty foods might become the consummation of a true super delicious and pleasant ritual. Or simply because throughout history, we´ve had the whole day to eat, to run after elephants (or either run from them!).

Who would say that: I´ve discovered peace and love in the kitchen!!! To that, we can add all the anguishing, depressing and deafening sound pollution of a big metropolis, like London. The result: after hours of traffic jams, the kitchen has been a refuge, with pinches of reflections. Something like the spice of life. About **culinary**, still, I´ll tell you the English do not have the best menus. Nevertheless, as in London there are people from every part of the Planet, here it is possible to know a lot of what the whole world cooks. The bad aspect is that the **restaurants** are expensive, even though buying in markets and cooking at home is cheap.

When I bought my second return **ticket** back to Brazil (I couldn´t use the first one, which expired, as it was predicted – since I bought it only because it was required to obtain the entry visa...), the saleswoman made a mistake, charging me the standard price, and not the student one. That is why I paid around 1000 Reais more than I should have. Do you think I got my money back, after the mistake was discovered? You are wrong. I´ll have to face the loss, believe it or not. The excuse is, when I paid it, I agreed with that price, even if I had asked for a student ticket. To me, that sounds like an insult. And a big one.

As a foreigner, mainly because I´ve earned the money for the work that I´m forbidden to do here, I cannot make greater complaints. But for the record: in Brazil, this does not happen. PROCON protects consumers, hence I would´ve had this problem solved, or at least with a solution provided. Darn it. The positive side of it (all things have) is that we are obliged to take lessons of patience and tolerance. A Brazilian conquest: Brazil is one of the

countries which best protects consumers.

And what about the donkey George W. B., who was reelected? I can´t help it. I find at least curious (what is the adjective for such description?) the fact that the most technologically developed country gets so mistaken in social and human sciences, once we all know peace, respect, tolerance and solidarity are fundamental principles of a developed society (and these are merits that the donkey George does not have). Controversy and irony. **What is development** after all? Did I include what destroys the Planet, goes against nature and leads to extinction? Even if many don´t like this issue, we have to agree with Aristotle, when the master claims that "Politics is a necessary evil". At least for those who want to be independent.

I haven´t traveled to another country for 30 days. I miss it already. For better or worse: I got addicted to it! Luckily, I´ll be able to tell you about new rides in a short time. You can save more time to travel (or to read!).

I´ll say farewell for today. May joy, quality of life, honesty, good health, solidarity, justice, peace and love be with you. And if this is considered like this: May **God** be with you. Amen. By the way: our Father must be mortally disappointed with those who attack and kill in His name... Out Bush, Blair and all the others who make wars!

Warm hugs, Tião Vicente.

15/11/2004

22h33min

Good evening here and good afternoon there!

Last week, a suicidal driver threw his car against a train here in London. It was a shocking crime, which got a lot of repercussion. It made me think, again, about a subject that has raised my curiosity for a long time: **what makes someone to commit suicide?** What leads someone to believe – mistakenly – there is no solution for whatever it is? Or that the solution may be so difficult that it is not worth it to be taken? I don´t know.

But surely, there is some relationship with the madness of this world, growing insane, and worse: contagious. Such inequality and pressure, so much "development", that the human being cannot keep up, in a healthy and natural way, with the new impositions of the social, political, economic, cultural systems etc. All in all, I hope we can take care of ourselves!

Last Tuesday, I went for a stroll in the center of London, walking in the streets and observing the whereabouts. For my surprise, everything seems to have the Christmas spirit already. I don´t know if it´s really the spirit, or if the shops are forcing it so as to increase sales... Well then, I was taken by a feeling of peace and love, as it happens to me every Christmas. For me, it is the best time of the year, joyful, healthy and thoughtful. It would be so good if people had other times like this one throughout the 365 days of the year. Perhaps in the future. It all depends on Jesus, or on the shops... Laughter...

I´m getting more and more interested on the topic of "**quality of life**". After having visited and observed so many cities, I started to believe a "civil agglomeration" above 500 000 inhabitants considerably loses control over the instruments which provide well-being to the majority of the population. A relative conclusion, as everything in life. A more detailed analysis will be done in another opportunity.

This makes me think about the place where I want to live. I´ll look for a city with a vast cultural life and a population which is mostly young and goes to university, near the sea, where it is sunny in the winter and in the summer, natural beauties, with good leisure options, with a population between 200 and 500 thousand inhabitants. I don´t want to live in "jungle city" (*selvacidade* in Portuguese, this is the name of the band that I formed with friends, years ago – and whose songs are on the internet...) Does anyone have anything to suggest to me? I was thinking of creating roots in the *gaucha* mountain region or in Florianópolis. What do you think?

By the way, I observed that one of the most creative public leisure spaces is the **pedestrian streets**. All the cities should have them, no matter how big each one is. There are mainly two kinds. The first one is

the commercial pedestrian streets, where, after working hours, there are handcraft stands, games, sports, skating tracks and bicycle paths, cultural events, fairs, street artists. The second kind of pedestrian streets is of bars and restaurants, always delicious! Tables inside the establishments and in the open air make the places extremely pleasant. Do you have public assets in your town which provide a good quality of life? If not, complain to your governors!!!

Or you yourself organize the pedestrian streets, seizing the opportunity to open a business there and get rich. Because "only" to write – observe, protest, give ideas – is something that, although it helps the world a lot (also to create pedestrian streets), does not raise money not even to buy some food in a place like that... A writer has to work (in another thing) when everybody else works and has to write when the others go to the pedestrian streets to have fun...

How ignorant our society is: if someone goes to school only until he/she is 15 years old, opens a business and starts to make lots of money, almost everyone idolizes him or her... But if a person studies during 20 years and prepares him or herself to be a good professor (or writer), almost everyone thinks it´s an exaggeration if he/she makes as much money as a "successful entrepreneur" makes...

Following the news about Brazilian football, I got very proud of being a *gremista*. As you can see, we´ll show chivalry and generosity again. After all, it is not every day that you see a soccer team sharing with others the opportunity of disputing the First Division. We have already won enough. Next year, we may let the others do the same. In times of solidarity, nothing more coherent. Hooray to Grêmio, a team which adapts rapidly to the evolution of social relations! Enough of this selfish, unequal system, in which some get so much and others do not get anything. Congratulations to the tricolor nation. For sure, we´re giving a beautiful example... Hahaha...

Last Friday, I sold my sax for a bargain. As incredible as it may seem, it is more expensive to send a sax to Brazil, by mail, than to buy another new one in the tropical country. Moreover, it hurt so much to get rid of my

companion instrument, which saved my stay abroad...

Since a couple of years ago, I´ve tried to **stretch** every morning. Five minutes help a lot. I feel so much better, willing, satisfied, smiling, calm, good-humored, relaxed and concentrated. Perhaps doing the same would also help the ones who are interested? It is worth trying. Try it, since the attempt is for free, and, also, free of taxes. Laughter...

Today, I am recovering from a very strong flu, caused by another party in a Londoner bar. I have showed up there quite often (a euphemism, not to talk about partying... Hahaha...) on Tuesdays, when only students are allowed in and the beer costs 1 pound, 30% of the regular price. As every student environment, extroversion, informality, beauty, energy and joy of the youngsters make the clock be measured by emotions. How wonderful! I feel I´ll always be searching for moments like these all my life. These were simply purifying hours of the body and of the spirit. And my Tião side knows this as nobody else. He´ll be eternally young, I hope.

In the early morning of last Tuesday, I ate some pastry pastel, when I was coming back from a bar. It was so tasty! It was the second time I ate it since I arrived in London. Curiously, they don´t sell this kind of food so often here. I even heard that pastry pastel is a Brazilian food. Really?

Reading the newspaper a couple of days ago, I came across a survey about Germany nowadays. Everyone knows the social and economic differences between the old western and eastern parts are still big. Nevertheless, I got surprised as I read that 20% of the current population is favorable to the return of the Berlin Wall!! And that there is discontent in the two sides, among all ages. I was not expecting to hear that. Another curiosity of such an educated population, who, in not such long ago time, supported Nazism... Seeing the return of the Wall as a solution to their current problems is an inadmissible backdown. If there were something similar happening in Brazil, the *gringos* would say: "they have got to keep on being a 3rd world country so as to learn..." What an unpredictable circus this huge world is, isn´t it? And what about you? Which walls are there in your life?

Last Friday night, I went to the theater to see the musical Stomp. They play percussion instruments made with everyday objects. For example, brooms, lighters, sinks, signs, garbage cans, bottles, matchboxes etc. The variety of rhythms is not their best, but their creativity as for the use of the "instruments" is impressive. Grade 10.

Congratulations to Putin, president of Russia, for having signed the Kyoto Treaty. It is good for the environment and, consequently, for all of us. I hope new agreements like this one are done in a very close future. And about what is to come very soon: hold it, since most of the trips are coming! I am anxious to be able to live and comment about them with you!!

A friend of mine asked me whether I had changed my mind about life in **small and big cities**. I said I hadn´t. I repeated what I believe in. If it is possible to enjoy the beauties that a big city has to offer, it´s perfect. But when we waste hours in traffic, the salary we get is basically to pay the rent, all kinds of pollution are present in our day by day, the work journey has to be increased so that we can afford the expensive cost of life etc., we become slaves of a maddening jungle, nothing else. Thus, if you cannot seize the beauties of a big city, before becoming a slave, I prefer the calmness and simplicity of a small town. I think the perfect thing, without a doubt something difficult and little common, is to live the calmness and to go to the "jungle city" only to enjoy its advantages such as, for example, the cultural life. Let us make a toast to this wish!

There are so many things happening here, many of them, I end up forgetting to tell you about. One of them is: There was I, in the Czech Republic, and a guy, wearing a t-shirt from Brazil, gave me the impression he was Brazilian. Then I asked him: "-Are you Brazilian?" and he answered, in English: "– Unfortunately, I´m not. I wish I were, but I was born in the United States". It was the first time I saw something like that, contrasting with the millions of Brazilians who leave our country and go abroad, searching for a better life, nevertheless abandoning and despising their own origins.

For several times, I´ve also forgot to comment another interesting fact. I entered one of the main stores of London and came across a publicity poster. It paraphrased René Descartes, if I´m not mistaken. It instigated consumption, representing the essence of the system in which we live in. It had the message "**I shop. Therefore I am**". It was a representative figure of one of the greatest deceptions I had throughout this journey. A cruelty with those who cannot consume and a mousetrap for those who believe in consumption and spend life working to pay their bills... Take a look.

Another fact involving the gringos happened here in London. An arrogant American wanted to cut in line at a bar. When he realized I had noticed it and had a look on his face showing he hadn´t liked it at all, he came towards me, trying to justify he had a reason to do that.

After talking a bit of nonsense, he asked me where I was from. I answered I was **American**. He laughed, since he certainly had noticed my accent, and then asked which city of the USA I was from. I then answered from none. I said I was Brazilian. And he asked how come I could be American and Brazilian at the same time. I suggested he should study some Geography, so as to check that our country is also in America.

He didn´t like it and said that Americans were those from the United States. I told him he should think whatever he wanted. But I highlighted that they were not the owners of the whole America yet. And that America was not reduced to the orchard of the USA. Isn´t it true?

When it was my turn in the line, I ordered a beer and left, telling him, in Portuguese, "See you later". Now, here I register my discontent with this other attempt of the *gringos* of taking control of the whole American continent. And, I highlight, not to seem radical: the mentality of people like these from the USA has millions of followers over there. Let us be careful!

At last, also involving Americans, you´ve got to be cautious: the world reveals lots of people opposing the *gringos* more and more every day, many times with even greater radicalism than the "Americans" defend their ideals. It calls my attention to see the hatred they are arising in the rest of the world. Abroad, you meet Americans who are astonished and frightened by their international image. And, many times, they are **treated by foreigners** as if they were to blame for the terrorism of their government. By the way, we´ve got to learn how to differ the people of the United States from the policies of the government of their country. There are many good people there, who must not pay for the evils their governors do.

For us to see what happens, we can put ourselves in their shoes: would we as Brazilians like to be held responsible for the policies that the ex-president Collor did??? I feel ashamed only to think that we have already elected (not with my vote!) a guy as dirty as he is. But I wouldn´t like to be treated as a corrupt at all. What I mean is: I think people should be more careful when they generalize a reference (terrorist or whatever it is) to another human being. Don´t you agree?

That´s all I have to tell you for today. I hope you also write some of your news, ideas and opinions, publish them on the internet and overthrow the already beaten minds of famous communicators! A wonderful week to you all, Tião Vicente.

22/11/2004

18h46min

Have a great Monday, Americans!

I´ll let go of the *cuia de chimarrão* – which I made on Saturday, but it is still "good" on Monday, as it is so cold that the *chimarrão* does not go sour – and write to you. In the middle of sending my stuff to Brazil, I come across the **high cost of mail**, but also with the personal value, the feeling and the good memories each object brings to me. I think I´ll end up sending almost everything, since I don´t know when I´ll have an experience like this again. And these belongings will certainly refresh my memory and instigate pleasant moments for the rest of my life.

I have a classmate from the English course who´s Mexican and her name´s Angélica, and she´s a rally driver. The main race that she participates is *La Carrera Panamericana*. According to what she says, only those who love this modality participate. Amazingly, there are no prizes for the winners, even if the enrollment fee for each championship costs 55.000 dollars for each team. It seems there are no sponsors, as this job is also a task for the teams. That is, they pay a lot to take part in the event, and their only pleasure is the payment... It is not by chance that only millionaires practice this sport.

I wonder what a good and happy life this woman must have. My adventurous spirit would love to participate in a rally like this, but not wasting so much money. Not even if I had plenty. Out of curiosity, I just ask myself: knowing that we go to an extremely cheap language school, why did she pick it to learn English? I don´t know. But, let it be said, that this Mexican woman, who´s married to a Scot, is very nice. Lucky her that she doesn´t have her dreams limited by money.

Just for a change, I've been thinking… The limit to **dreams** is infinite. Are dreams for real? If they are not, we can certainly make them come true. They are what is best in us, what we want more and cherish more. Nobody

can deprive their freedom, to explore them, to submit them to what´s undesired, to hurt them or to make them suffer. They are not unhappy. It is us who must reveal what´s best in us and to add to our reality whatever it is that we want. It is we who make dreams come true, even if it is with imagination...

Winter is here to stay. The parks are full of leafless trees and the squirrels are with no camouflage. This year is much less rainy than the year before. The temperature is already negative and the forecast is that this will be the coldest year of the latest 20. It´s a sign that there´ll be lots of snow and ice during the 5 weeks I´ll be traveling around Europe, before I go to Central America. It scares me (since lots of snow is a pretty and calm thing only on television), but it does not frighten me. Another thing: I miss the student life I had back in Brazil, without having to work. Never mind. Ahead we go!

Last Friday, I took a picture of a marble Charles Chaplin. There are several other **honors** to the greatest genius of comedies spread all over the city of London. It is quite interesting to be able to register your idols. Even though it is just a statue, the intention of honoring such personalities with a remarkable presence in history is worth it. I've taken dozens of photos like this.

Last Wednesday, I was at a bus stop, full of people, when a van parked on a prohibited spot and its driver just vanished in seconds, abandoning the vehicle. In a few minutes, the street had been evacuated and all the anti-bomb apparatus was assembled to verify the situation. I caught my bus some moments afterwards and, as a result, I don´t know the end of the story. But I just tell you that for you to have an idea of the atmosphere here in Europe, especially in London. The terror of this "**terrorist era**" is already part of our everyday life. People are learning about and getting used to the situation. I hope that, in the future, we don´t read the news about a terrorist attack with the same indifference with which we read about murders, thefts, hunger, misery, wars, corruption etc. today. It would be a new kind of alienation, what is always regrettable, yet

probable, as humans (ironically, in modern times) are becoming robots, turned on in an "auto pilot"...

Still on wars, sometimes I wonder what the world and contemporaneous societies would be like in case each soldier had exercised productive activities, rather than destructive ones. Throughout our so bloody history, the substitution of soldiers for farmers, teachers, artists, health agents, etc. would´ve determined the construction of another planet, surely much, much better. I suppose the difference would be such to a point that we wouldn´t be or live the way we do now. Nevertheless, to precisely describe this hypothetical society in which we would be living goes way beyond my limitations. Still, my imagination suggests a peaceful, solidary, intelligent, just, well-structured, brotherly and happy place. What do you think of that?

I´ve been asking myself what such a pleasurable feeling, which takes hold of me whenever I´m **traveling**, consists of. In the same way, I try to research its origin.

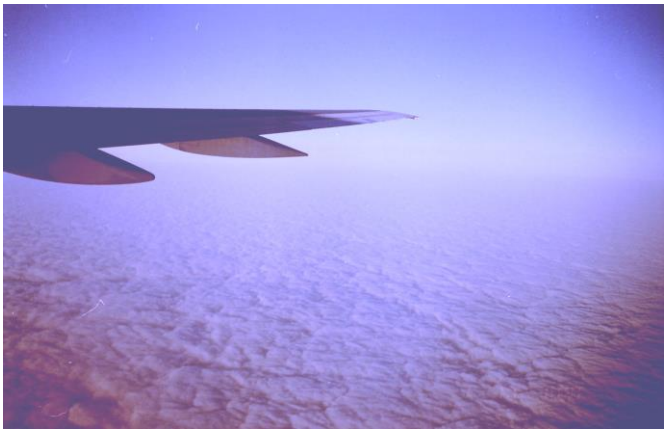
I feel happy, satisfied, relaxed, joyful, constantly learning in a super pleasurable way. I observe there are influences working on me with every new natural scenario, each language or communication, each different mind, each building or monument with new stories to be told, each life or experience and its cultural peculiarities. Also, each social, political or economic structure, each point of view, each analysis of the evils and of the benefits of this planet, each solution proposed for the myriad of problems influence me... These are factors that contribute to the evolution of our very own conscience and even of unconsciousness. Still, they broaden our horizons, providing us with a more accurate understanding of the essence of life, of others, of the world and of ourselves. And, when we unfold such paths, we are learning to live.

Well, **if the supreme objective of life is happiness, learning to live means something similar to dominating the formula of being happy**. Thus, the act of traveling provides me the sensation of finding my own reason!

New possibilities of attending to the demands of our wills and wishes arise. Many times, we end up even finding out a bit more about the whole lot of what we want. Amid doubts and questionings, it is better than a satisfactory answer: it is the certainty of moving towards the desired direction, whichever it is.

And so as to broaden the amplitude of these simple words, it is paramount that we conceptualize **trip or travel**. The Aurélio dictionary defines *trip* as the "Act of going from one place to another which is relatively far away". Moreover, we can surely travel not only moving to different places, but also through books, projects, jobs, sports, arts, fashions, cultures, games, leisure activities, passions, loves, experiences, kindness etc. And always perfuming life with imagination. And what about you, dear reader, what is your relation with trips?

And you, traveler, do you agree with that? And you, the ones who do not travel, do you disagree? Either having an opinion or not, do travel. Don´t give up on constructing or solidifying your own happiness! Below, a pure and inspiring image to travel:



Besides these endless positive aspects that trips provide in the individual sphere, we have to think about the **collective gains**: if people, instead of buying a second car, apartment, piece of land, instead of adding one more digit to their bank accounts, spent their money traveling, wouldn't the world be better, more humane and less materialistic? The effect of open minds to new and good ideas couldn´t be another one, cultures formed by a new cosmopolitan way.

I even predict most people would find natural, for example, ideas such as the one that each human being could not have more than R$ 100 million (or what value?) of property under his/her name. Whenever someone reached this or another socially established maximum limit, they would not be able to sum up more than that. They would then be "obliged" to spend their money to be able to cumulate again, humans would detach themselves of material assets and would attach themselves to a greed of having more time, leisure and quality of life. Really?

Luckily, in a few days I´ll be flying around other countries, cumulating happiness. Soon "I'm going to tell my mom all about it". And you too!

The British magazine "The Economist" has published a survey about quality of life. Among 111 countries, Brazil comes in a mere 39th place. Ireland is the winner, followed by Switzerland and Norway. The USA is on 13th, China on 60th, the United Kingdom on 29th and Japan on 17th spot. The used criteria were, among others, *per capita* income, health, freedom, jobs, family life, the climate, political stability, safety, equality between sexes. Did you find it interesting? Let us accompany other research about this and concerning the Human Development Index (Índice de Desenvolvimento Humano – IDH). This must be **one of our references**.

What are you up to this summer???

See you next week, Tião Vicente.

28/11/2004

17h57min

Buenas!! Here it is 7 in the evening. I´ve just made my lunch and I have some good and some bad news to tell. The good news is that I made a fish steak stew with a tasty sauce – whose name I do not know. I mixed it with rice and ate it in several meals in a row. It is only funny for those who read it, not for the ones who have got to eat it. I´m obliged to choose the menu for each week. As I cook just to myself and also haven´t got much

time to do it, even though it is a practical one, the solution of having the same food for 4 or 5 days one after the other is quite upsetting... And the bad news? Well, despite the fact that all my work as a "cook" was only to turn on the oven, I managed somehow to burn myself. Nothing serious, but it is something that puts at stake what I thought could be a true vocation... Laughter...

Every time I go to the supermarket I take **plastic bags** from home. Thus, I help out avoiding more pollution. This lesson I learned at home, seeing my parents use the same cloth bag to go grocery shopping. For the environment, unite! The interesting thing is that every time I refuse new bags, here in Europe, I hear "Why? A plastic bag is so cheap..." What I mean is, there´s plenty of money, but a lack of knowledge concerning environmental care. In Brazil, salespeople get quite happy, as they save a plastic bag. That is, there isn´t any idea concerning environmental care either, even though there is lack of money ... Ah! Brazil, our Brazil...

I remember, in the four years when I went to Christening classes, we were questioned about which had been our good deed of the week. Almost always, I would answer that I had stood up in a bus to give my seat to an old lady. The catechist, who was about 136 years old, would applaud me standing up. The fact was that I didn´t even use to take a bus! I would say that just because I didn´t want to report the good deeds I had really done. So, as we were obliged to answer, I would say something that wouldn´t hurt anyone and would make the catechist happy.

Well then. The mills of God grind slowly, but surely. The public transportation in London is awful at times when everybody decides to move around. Crowded buses (I usually have to ride standing up) and congested traffic. The result: all the times that I lied about giving my seat to an old lady are being paid with "interest", to a point that I even ask myself whether God is using the same formula as bank interests are calculated in Brazil... Hahaha.

On Thursday, I went to the movies to see the love story "Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind". The actor in a leading role is Jim Carrey,

what makes you expect a good comedy. The film is also an intelligent production. Their ideas are quite interesting. One of them is that we cannot control our **feelings**. Also, that we fall in love with characteristics, and not with people. And that the human being cannot be programmed, like a machine, for example. I just loved it. If you have the opportunity and the interest in seeing this film, enjoy it!

What is the Christmas spirit like there? Have you already assembled this year´s Christmas tree? How bright, colorful and flowered is your "inner Christmas tree" this Christmas?

Listening to the song by Allanis "An old man turned ninety-eight, He won the lottery and died the next day… Isn't it ironic?" I had a pleasant surprise. (Reread the phrase before and think of it to participate on the following idea!!!) There I was, quite distracted, daydreaming, when I thought of the lyrics of what I was listening to. I imagined myself in the situation of the almost not young any longer of 98 years of age, and what was my first reaction? "Damn it, dying at 98!" I thought about it a lot more and got happy. After all, I simply ignored the lottery money and regretted his death. As it was something totally natural, spontaneous and rather unconscious, I interpreted it as a sign of my values. Eventually, I got quite joyful and satisfied. What was your reaction about this phrase? Isn´t it interesting?

Speaking of death, think along with me. The greatest (collective) human wish is eternity. But it is impossible (on this Earthy adventure) and **death** is certain. Then, I wonder if the greatest wish, among the feasible ones, becomes the one of the "good death", thus considered as the one which is preceded by a long, healthy life, and whose time was well lived?

Yesterday, I attended a course about "Science, Crime and Justice", at the University of London. I got impressed. I killed lots of curiosities about the contribution of science for the resolution of crimes and the obtaining of justice. There were several lectures showing the theory as well as the practice in the area. Among the lecturers there were scientists, criminologists from the FBI and jurists. The main idea of the course was that the criminals of the future will have to study – and a lot – so as to exercise

their "profession". This will take place where this entire infrastructure is in fact implemented. Also, if there was any suicidal in the audience, he was granted with different possibilities of practicing his wish. The only negative aspect of the event, but which was inevitable, was the exhibition of photos and the respective clarification of the crime right after lunch... There were many people leaving hastily to relieve their stomach... Other than that, those who like to read Sherlock Holmes would have been thrilled. Speaking of which, his stories in English are a **great tip** for whoever wants to learn this language.

Last Friday I went to the **Freud** museum, the father of psychoanalysis. I saw his library, as well as the entire house where he spent his last year alive. The ambience was quite comfortable. The divan, just like the other objects that he used for the analysis, give a good impression of the inspiration that he had to write. Would you like to see a bit of this? Admire it…

In this house – a beautiful mansion on a quiet and flowered street – is where his daughter Anna also lived, a pioneer in some themes of childhood psychology. I just loved the visit, mainly because I got to know better an

ambience, a home that was created by a great personality. We can inspire ourselves with the life styles of these geniuses, as well as appreciate their lives and work.

I still want to look for the place where George Orwell lived here in London. He wrote the novels "1984" and "Animal Farm". The latter is a book that I would say is the one which describes **our society**, in the simplest and briefest way possible. A classic you cannot miss. Besides having our eyes open, the fun is that we easily start relating the people we know with the animals from the story...

Send me some news as well!!

Have a nice week, Tião Vicente.

08/12/2004

20h10min

Good evening!

How are you this week? Lots of Christmas peace, love and warmth? I´ve got to register this: I saw a Beetle here in London. Ferraris can be seen on the streets every day, but not Beetles. For those who like cars, the English capital is the right place. The power of the currency enables several people to show off luxuries like this.

I was astonished by an article on a Londoner newspaper: 92% of the English people travel abroad regularly (at least twice a year). Many of them own houses in other countries. I just couldn´t help it and I compared it to Brazil. I wonder if the number of Brazilians who travel abroad regularly is higher than 1%. Undoubtedly, it is a great difference!

Last week, I visited the new Science **Museum**, here in London. Something phenomenal. In touristic guides, it is well deserved listed the number 1 attraction here. The visit made us travel in time, giving us the sensation of having lived some thousands years ago (is there a better sensation than that?). As we left the museum, the contact with the world of

the third millennium is even weird. In the first few minutes, I was assimilating the 21st century and analyzing the level of development in which we are living. This visit is the sort of thing that every human being should have the right and the duty of doing. And other good news: the entrance of the main museums in London is free! A great incentive to culture. An example to be followed.

Last Wednesday, I saw the one that is acclaimed as the best of the **musicals**: "The Phantom of the Opera". I am still impressed by the magnitude of the play. Tomorrow night I intend to go to the play "The Miserable". This one must be fantastic as well.

Last Friday, I had my hair cut. I was a guinea pig in a school again. During all this time here in England I did not pay for having my hair cut not even once. I´ve always gone to this school. I´ve had about 10 different hairstyles, some very funny. But above all, I´ve had lots of fun!! The photos are well taken care of and one day I´ll show them to my grandchildren. I hope it is a reason for laughing about the hairstyles and not for proving that I did not use to be bald in the past... Hahaha...

I read in a report from the UN that every 5 seconds a child dies around the Planet due to lack of food. Also, almost 1 billion people do not have enough food. As we know, the difference between the rich and the poor is increasing drastically. Conversely, the so called 92% of the English who travel abroad regularly will soon have their group enlarged, owing to the "work done by the government of the United Kingdom". Similarly, the number of "Ferraris" only tends to increase. What an insane world we live in. I wonder if this will ever end. When will we start to, at least, diminish all this difference? When will people talk less about the growth of the GNP and a lot about the sharing of the infinite wealth that already exists?

I feel sick seeing so many "economic crises" and debates about "growing" 3 or 3.5%... It would be much more humane and less radical to debate the sharing of the 100%! But what has each one of us been doing?! I imagine how depressing the museum with our social history will be, this very one that all of us are part of and helped to build at every second.

Still, as for living intensely, going on an adventure in diverse and rich experiences, feeling the **absorption of life experiences**, having the opportunity of making the most of ultra-varied learnings, in a constant and abundant way, I ask myself: I wonder if when we get older we really get more intelligent? Or as time goes by, by itself, does it provide a mere notion of limits, of what we are, can do, should do, know about, think of, love etc.?

Last night, I threw my farewell party here. It was awesome! The only "problem" was the excess of lime in the *caipirinha*, what made me enter the wrong room when I went back home, in the middle of the night. As "it was too dark", I almost went to sleep in Linda´s in-laws´ bed. Linda is the Malaysian woman with whom I share the apartment. Luckily, they woke up before I lay down in their bed and "accompanied" me to my room... The first hour of the day was of pure laughter and jokes. It was good that they also had fun, at least with the mocking of today!! There is no way... This Tião side of mine, always an adolescent, is always bringing about "strong emotions"... Hahaha...

I´ll leave London this Friday morning. My trip itinerary is written below, for you to accompany me in a wonderful new adventure.

PORTUGAL:
Lisbon – 10, 11 and 12
Coimbra – 13
Porto – 14, 15 and 16.

SPAIN:
Madrid – 17, 18 and 19
Granada – 20 and 21
Murcia – 22
Zaragoza – 23, 24 and 25
Barcelona – 26, 27 and 28.

SWITZERLAND:
Genève – 29 and 30
Zurich – 31/12/2004 and 1º/01/2005.

ITALY:
Venice – 2, 3
Verona – 4
Bologna – 5
Florence – 6, 7
Rome (The Vatican) – 8, 9, 10 and 11
Naples – 12 e 13.

JAMAICA: 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19.

CUBA: 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26.

BUENOS AIRES: 27.

IJUÍ: 28/01/2005.

I´ll try to send some news throughout the journey. I think it´ll be difficult for me to answer the e-mails from now on. Thus, keep on writing on the blog.

Thank you all for participating in this site. All our communication, including the comments, will be printed when I come back to Ijuí and, together with the photos, e-mails, letters etc., will be part of the diary of these dreams that have come true.

Below comes the project of a song-poem. Fellow artists, I wonder if there is anybody, besides my mother, who likes these words. (It´s not that she is a doting mom. Of course not...) Laughing...

A big warm hug to all of you, Tião Vicente.

Mind and Heart With no Moths

Hey offspring
You cry, scream and despair

Only moans and complains
Of such a beautiful life

To principles and concepts
You cannot say no.
You're human, like all of them
There's no other solution.

Walk, find a love
Drink a little, sunbathe.
Go to the beach and work
The reason is football.

Study and travel
Even in your bed.
Game, circus or bet
Learn to participate.

The essence is never lost
Those who search always find it.
Decipher your own world
Mind and heart with no moths.

/: Imagine
Hail to the Alternative Society.
Remove every rock of the way
And make a revolution!
(Velvet revolution) :/

And don't be afraid of being a walking metamorphosis.

16/12/2004

13h41min

Poix, *poix*... It´s Christmas, It´s Christmas!!

So here we go. I´ll quickly tell you what the beginning of the trip is like. I arrived in **PORTUGAL** on the 10th. Right at the first moment, a nightmare: I "lost" (they vanished from my side) some documents and money. The first day was mostly to press charges at the police station, to cancel bank cards and to contact "lost and found" (one of those experiences in which the one who was robbed wastes more time than the time the thief would be in jail, in case he got arrested...). The first three days, as planned

in the itinerary, were spent in Lisbon. I stayed in a hostel located at the Parque das Nações, a place built for Expo 98. As a consequence, everything there is new and modern. The best that can be done by science and technology was and is being done there, mainly represented by Engineering. It is the rich area of the city.

The buildings downtown are beautiful and antique, but not well taken care of. This lack of resources to take care of the architecture is usually a typical fact of a country without money, with the economy in crisis. A pleasant surprise that I had was the music in public places. There are hundreds of loudspeakers spread around the main streets and squares (but nothing abusive like the foolish habit – common in Brazil nowadays – of putting a loudspeaker in an automobile and imposing its noise to everybody else). As it should be, many things are similar to ours. For example, a tourist who can´t speak Portuguese has difficulties finding any kind of information. Soon, I noticed we inherited the gift of lack of signs...

In Portugal, even though it is the land of the *fado*, the Portuguese guitar, most musicians must play the Gaita. At least I just saw Gaita players around the streets and train stations. Hence, I took a very funny photo, of two real artists.

In Lisbon, I also visited the Mosteiro dos Jerônimos (a Monastery). It is a huge building, with a beautiful window, full of places to take some time to think and to relax (wow, I got even impressed by the precision of this definition of a monastery... Hahaha...). It is located in front of Praça do Império. It is full of paths with marble benches in the middle of several pine trees, other trees, gardens and lawns. Currently, the main attraction is the biggest Christmas trees in Europe, with 65 meters of height (data given by the Tourist Information).

In Coimbra, located on top of and amid hills, I found a little (*pequenita)* town, where you can go everywhere just on foot (*pode-se ir aos passos para todas as partes*), even if you have to walk a little bit (*um bocadito*). And it has a university atmosphere, damn (*raios)*! The main tourist attractions are the University of Coimbra and "Portugal in miniature". The latter shows the main attractions and monuments in a super-reduced size. On the last day, I woke up at 10:30 and almost missed my train, which would leave at 11:00. All thanks to a hangover caused by a round of beers at the "Academic Association of Coimbra". That is why I feel that, if one day I repeat the same itinerary of this adventurous journey, everything will be

different. Unless my Tião spirit does not grow old.

In Porto, I found the best bargain of the world: 9 Euro to use the public transport for 3 days. Or for 9.50 Euro (that´s it!!!) you would also get an enormous map and a watch! Can you believe that? Ah! And the deadline for using the transport would change to 10 days! I asked the ticket box officer if there was anyone who would not seize that bargain, when buying a ticket for the public transport. He replied that it depended on the person. I had never seen 50 cents be worth that much... In the downtown area, out of every 10 stores, 11 were bakeries. Still in Porto, I had the impression that the number of men and women with a mustache is smaller there than it is in Lisbon... Hahaha...

"O Porto", as the natives say, is all under a great construction. Huge underground parking lots as well as subway stations are being built. The return of the investment in the long term for keeping automobiles is guaranteed due to the frightening increase of the number of cars. However, if the money were invested on people, wouldn´t the return be greater? Still talking about transportation, here in Portugal, most buses run on natural gas or electricity. In Brazil, there is still a great lack of initiative for alternatives to oil. Even the way we use ethanol is far from being enough in the search for renewable fuels.

The hostel where I am staying here in Porto has a photographic view. It is at the top of a mountain, facing the beautiful Douro River. Seizing another super bargain, I bought 4 legs of salami in a supermarket. Now I have to handle them as quickly as possible, before they go bad in my backpack. Can anyone help me? I visited the Igreja São Francisco (San Francis Church). It has got Brazilian gold and wooden sculptures. They claim that, initially, at least 600 kg of gold were used there. The greatest Portuguese sculptors of that time did something that is a reference all over Europe, it is true. But I don´t think it´s fair that Brazilians have to pay the entrance fee. I did complain, but it was no use. Still about this church, I saw the monument in honor of Ivo de Treguier, French, patron of jurists. Among his attributes, there is the famous scales, a symbol related to Justice (do not

mix this one up with the Judicial Power).

Yesterday, in the afternoon, I crossed the Dom Luis Bridge and went up to the vineyards that produce the famous Port wines. It was delicious; I even had the right of doing some tasting and a good discount in my shopping. I could only buy one bottle, since my backpack has no more space. I still have some weeks of traveling around ahead of me.

All in all, Portuguese people love Brazilians and Brazil. The main source of information they have about us is through the soap operas from Globo Network (a real pity!), which are broadcasted here as well. They are very helpful, kind, thoughtful, simple people indeed, who always seem to be suspicious about something. An old lady told me that to get to St. George Castle (Castelo São Jorge), downtown Lisbon, it was necessary to go to the top of the hill. But it was a "prank, you shouldn´t go there. Because when you get there, you have to pay 3 Euro to go in" ("pegadinha, tu não deviax ir. Chegando lá, tenx que pagar 3 eurox para entrar").

When I asked an old man who was in his early 70´s about the way to castle, he explained it to me. But soon after he said he had never been there and that he would never go. Why? Well, "the castle is a Roman thing, a king thing. I am in favor of democracy. Do you want to check that? To prove to you I´m not lying, I´ll accompany you up to the castle gate. I´ll show you that in democracy there is solidarity, something impossible for the kings" ("o caxtelo é coisa de romanox, de rei. E eu sou da democracia. O senhor quer ver? Para provar-te que eu não extou mentindo, vou lhe acompanhar até o portão do caxtelo. Vou lhe moxtrar que na democracia há solidariedade, coisa impossível para os reix"). And that is how it was. He accompanied up to the gate, always kind but rebellious against the Roman Empire. What a lad!

Then I write a new thought: does human mortality represent the biggest democracy on Earth? Only democracy allows everyone to have a go...

More than half the area of Portugal is covered by forests, almost always in mountain lands. After 7 days here, I can guarantee that some jokes about Portuguese have some true in it... Laughter... Gardening is definitely not their big Portuguese passion. Ah! I´m tired of visiting churches already. And I still have two weeks in Italy... Hahaha...

The best Portuguese news so far: after so much time in London, I´m wearing sunglasses again, to protect my eyes from the sun. That´s wonderful (won´t I miss the rain for years? I don´t think so). On Tuesday, I fell asleep by the Douro River, at the sound of Fados from the Portuguese guitar. Pure joy!

The itinerary is on the previous posting. In the other countries, I´ll also try to go to cafés like this one from where I write you. Even if I have to write the way I´m doing now, in a hurry. That´s a horrible thing, I hate this rush. But the fact is that there isn´t much time really to write at this moment. I´ll go back to the hostel, get my stuff and fly to the train station, to endure a 13-hour trip to Madrid. If there is still time, I´ll quickly pass by the city park.

Send me some news through the blog, as I won´t check my emails so soon.

Hugs and I miss you, Tião Vicente.

27/12/2004

17h27min

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!!

Here are some quick news from **SPAIN**.

Greetings and I get around: If I was beaten a lot, from some dreams I am carving [Buenas e me espalho: se de muito apanhei de plancha, de alguns sonhos estou fazendo entalhos]. And I hope Capitão Rodrigo (do you know this character by the genius writer Erico Verissimo?) does not mind me paraphrasing him, laughter...

Airplanes have always impressed me. Seeing several tones leaving the ground in such a natural way, similar to a bird, is something amazing. Every take off astonishes me. It wasn´t different on Praça Maior in Madrid. I gave some pigeons half a bread roll. In an unexpected way, a little sparrow showed up and, in a second, took off with the bread that was approximately its size. It just cheated the pigeons. I have to admit, it was also an amazing, astonishing take off.

Whenever I run into Japanese tourists I wonder how much it is to develop pictures in the Land of the Rising Sun. The "Japs" snap everything and everyone with their cameras. It´s absolutely nonsense, because, if they filmed things, they would have not only the image but also the sound. Hahaha...

The modern cathedral of Madrid does not have sculptured walls, but its size and its shape as a round and tall "t" is impressive. Moreover, its location at the top of a hill makes the building even bigger. Also, the multicolored ceiling and altar give an atmosphere of more joy and informality to it than in most cathedrals. I liked it.

So many police and ambulance sirens on the streets of the Spanish capital made feel, for instants, as if I were in the maddening setting that London is. Terrible. All in all, the sound pollution of the big cities transforms silence into something precious.

In all places I have been to there are far more national flags than what I have seen in Brazil. That is another indicator of the **weak Brazilian patriotism**. Lamentable. That´s not so bad, since, apparently, the word "Brazil" and our flag seem to be a new trend. I just hope that together with it, comes a love for our people, and, as a consequence, everyone would be enticed to engage in the construction of a better country.

It is about time the disbelief on politicians and on governors stopped meaning a denial towards our country. It is our home. We need to make it better so as to like it. That is why I claim that traveling sets us free. As we face so much injustice, misery and ignorance, it´s normal to feel like living

on another planet. But we´ve got to understand that we cannot, not even in our minds, leave the people who suffer in this world behind. Thus, all we can do is to transform Earth into another home that belongs to everyone. And enough for everybody to feel good.

If in Portugal 90% of the buildings are not taken care of, in Spain 90% of them have a good appearance. A huge aesthetic difference. Still in Madrid, I walked around Praça da Espanha. There, there was an honor to two of the greatest adventurers ever: Don Quixote and Sancho Pança. Everyone has got to learn from them. Our lives are also full of windmills, which we have to overcome. To be inspired in our struggles and dreams, take a look at the next photo.

In Granada I got mesmerized with the *Alhambra*, which is a palace surrounded by gardens, at the top of a mountain. From the top of the towers you can see, on one side, the Serra Nevada, a breathtaking view. On the other, you can see the city of Granada. The water springs coming from the mountains help to color the nature of the place. For the greatness of the building, such a daring construction, hundreds of workers must have been necessary during centuries. Today there are dozens only to handle maintenance.

Granada has been the scenery of many movies, including Brazilian ones. The city is full of tourists even though it is winter now. I wonder how crowded it must be in the summer...

In Murcia, I met my friend Carmen, who I hadn´t seen for years, since she moved from Brazil to Spain. Besides the so pleasant company and hospitality, I had a private tour guide. In Zaragoza, where I stayed with her family, I visited the Basilica da Nossa Senhora do Pilar. It was built in 1515 in gothic style, which substituted the previous romantic style one destroyed in a great fire in the year 1443. Among the pictures, I highlight the ones by Goya. The name of the Basilica was given because of the tradition that the Virgin Mary, when she lived in Jerusalem, would have gone to Zaragoza to comfort the unmotivated apostle Santiago. She gave him a marble pillar, explaining to him that his belief and determination should be strong and solid on the same way. This fact happened on the 2nd of January of the year 40 of the Christian era. Today, the pillar is exhibited in a chapel inside the Basilica. It´s incredible: due the fact it has been touched so much by the pilgrims, the marble is worn out.

Another very interesting thing as well is that I saw an exhibition on excavations, discoveries and works in **Atapuerca**. I learned about the origin and the destiny of humanity. For those who don´t know what it is about, it is worth researching about it.

The great matriarch of the Grannel family, the dearest old lady Candelária, who is 87 years old, is still strong and active. By the way, the way Europeans treat elderly people is exemplar, with programs of social inclusion and stimulus to activities which provide quality of life.

I saw an old movie on TV called "Crocodile Dundee". In several moments I found similarities between the character named Mick and me, both going in an adventure in the big city. Believe me, a film of my adventures would also be a great comedy. Or perhaps a funny drama. Hahaha... We would just need a good moviemaker to get interested in these stories!

In the European Community, the change of the **university syllabus** is being discussed. They want to implement a system in which the graduation would last from 3 to 4 years and another two for the master degree. The objective is that all students become at least masters. In other words, young people must hurry up – or they are being rushed! Such reality would be impossible in Brazil, a country where most students work to pay their studies. Our condition makes a longer and more qualified graduation impossible. Again, there is no other way: to invest in education is the only path for the development with which almost everybody dreams of.

Speaking of which, it is worth telling that still in London I heard from a 40-year-old man the confession that he had not studied (but he had the opportunities), that he made money, was happy and saw no reason for people to study. A view of **education and development** actually typical of someone who hasn´t studied: selfish, the man only thought about himself. He benefited from science, technology and development, without noticing that people who studied a lot were the ones who brought all these to him! And how would he reward them? With nothing. His comprehension was limited to earn and spend money. An existential misery. The guy was culturally sedentary. I bet he didn´t use to read not even a medicine leaflet! If everyone in the world thought like that, the young people who are 40 today would have already died. I wonder how so many people do not notice that studying and reading regularly is the most effective way of exercising the brain for all the other things of the world. With this man who was in his 40´s, maybe I should´ve been "short and sweet", by saying (as he only thought of earning and spending) that not everyone who makes money reads and studies, but those who don´t read nor study run a very high risk of losing everything they have (what they got, inherited etc.). Perhaps this would´ve helped him to open his eyes...

The Spanish culinary is very rich and delicious. I repeat the words of my friend Luis Grannel, "in Spain people eat very well". Among the several interesting dishes that I had and that now I can remember are sea snail, vegetables, pulses and salads on the grill – similar to what *gauchos* do with

meat. There was also cod with honey and dried fruits sprinkled with olive oil, besides several kinds of seafood. The "tapas", sort of healthy and super varied starters, are truly delicious temptations, such as the Spanish culinary in general. When I remember it my mouth starts to water.

Wines and cavas, the Spanish sparkling wine, together with the typical sangria, are they main drinks of Spain. Good quality and low price start to turn this country into a competitor to the traditional French and Italian products.

The impression I had of Spain and of Spanish people was quite good. And with immense joy, I want to confess that I was even more positively surprised. I got to know a country which seeks quality of life in a simple way. The people are hospitable. They have human warmth, spread energy, appreciate solidarity and do not misspend luxury as most rich countries do.

Here there is a tip: there are **programs** attracting foreigners, mainly Latin-Americans (even more if they are students), because the number of Spanish children is low and, thus, the population does not grow. That is why Spain – like the European Community, in a general way – is getting more and more eclectic, something quite positive. By the way, as my friend Carmen says, the greater this mixture of races is, the better it gets. I´ve been so thrilled I´ve been dreaming of a planet with no borders, with a world which is only one for everyone, as if everybody lived in the same country.

Christmas time in Zaragoza couldn´t have been better. I saw Monica again, who I hadn´t seen for at least 1 year, when she moved from London. Besides the company and all the hospitality, I also got several gifts from the Grannel family. Among them, an album with 2 CDs with songs by Paco de Luccia. This **flamenco** genius is amazing. His imagination and creation seem to have no limits, except for the flamenco passion. The two CD´s are almost broken, as they have been over played, hahaha... A great suggestion for any music lover.

Interesting, on the evening of 24/12 the Spanish stay with their family at home. They celebrate with friends and go to bars on the 25th. Another

cultural difference – that has changed already – is the tradition of giving Christmas presents only on the 6th of January, Three Kings Day.

Well, getting to the end of my stroll in Spain, I visited Barcelona. The 1st day in this city of Catalonia was of a pure hangover, after a long night still in Zaragoza with my Spanish brother Paco. I even got a Santa hat from a Mrs. Claus who decided to take off her clothes in the middle of the party! Can you believe it?

The wooden and wide streets of Barcelona reminded me of the ones from Paris, a pleasant and cozy city. One thing I did not like in Spain was the bullfights. As time goes by I feel more disgusted with violence and I tattoo in my heart, mind and soul with a spirit of peace and love. But it is something cultural and, as far as possible, we must respect it. It is with respect towards the diverse beloved things that we will build the so desired social peace, isn´t it?

I will spend little **time** here in Barcelona. It is possible to visit the main touristic attractions (in big cities, 3 days are usually enough for that), but the essence of cultural and human relations – what attracts me the most –, cannot be observed so quickly. It is necessary to broaden the observations and the reflections. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that this spy through the keyhole of the world has unfolded a fascinating planet, with relations capable of energizing life and inspiring the struggle for a better universe for all.

I get impressed when I see the work of Gaudí, the architect responsible for many of the buildings in Barcelona. People who think, imagine, create, produce and share are those who I admire the most.

Artistic neighborhoods in the cities are the places in which I would rather be. There are painters, magicians, musicians, artisans, dancers, actors, etc. who charm people and help to build a better world, through the Arts. Every little city or big neighborhood should have a space like that. Who would help me to make this demand?

Long walks make you very tired, mainly when they are consecutive, during several days. So I have got to lie down, rest and fall asleep. However, as if avoiding sleeping was not enough – such is my will and hunger of the lucid and conscious activities of life –, the night life of these places is more than tempting. Hence, whenever I sleep I get the sensation I am wasting time. And to spend, use the time is not a problem, but to waste it is a great defeat to all of us. It is precious, and life is so short and the clock is always ticking and it doesn't go backwards. Isn't it true?

It is quite cold here in Barcelona. The temperature is around 0º C during the day, lowering even more at night. And to think it will get worse, as I will face an intense cold and a lot of snow in Switzerland! It is pure joy for a Brazilian. In Italy, it will be less cold. But it is not bad. Quite on the contrary. Soon after Europe, Central America awaits me. Jamaica and Cuba will be the other extreme. I will not take any money to the Caribbean islands, but I will bring a cultural treasure from there. Well, it is fun, as long as the body can take it...

So as to share ideas, **poems** are always very welcome. I love this enjoyable and intelligent way of socializing thoughts! As you must have already noticed, I prefer the clear and objective poetry, one that facilitates the interpretation of the reader. Dense texts, to an extent they are only comprehended after the author dies, were never the ones which most attracted me. Thus, my poems are light and straightforward. Below are the doodles of another one, which I started writing here in Spain.

Youngster!

You have a heart
Tired of waiting
For what is yet to come
Your anxiety won't help.

Your wishes and dreams
Cannot imprison you
Live while you're alive
Seize your time and place.

You weren't the creator
It's major to accept
To build your own world
Mysteries unveil.

To be complete, even imperfect
As a learner you'll reach
You dreams and illusions
Well and badly you'll comprehend.

A few go to extremes
And only geniuses find balance
Almost always unknown
But happy kings of their own worlds.

Unhappy, just for a few seconds
Until we recall our secret
All quite simple, genius
Of the pains of the world they aren't afraid anymore.

Therefore go sailing
Go far, beyond the wharf
Discover your islands, beaches and seas
Fish mermaids and lovers.

And when you anchor
On the harbor of life
You'll cure and understand your wounds
Limits, versions and modesty.

And time won't matter
Condition or possibility
The truth, principles will be worth it
Your world with no addictions, but values.

Hugs and Season's greetings, Tião Vicente.

06/01/2005

15h39min

Happy New Year, goodbye to the old one...

In **SWITZERLAND** it was very cold; there was a lot of snow. Geneva, a diplomatic city, has the headquarters of at least 200 international organizations as its greatest attractions. Among them are the headquarters of the UN – it was closed for visitors, due to the end of the year holidays –, UNICEF, ILO, WTO and the Red Cross. I visited the latter and I could check the brilliant work of this volunteer organization, founded in the 19th Century.

Examples like this certainly contribute in a decisive way for a more fraternal, caring, healthy and peaceful world. But it is a pity I could not do a greater number of visits. In other words, the time I have is very short to see so many good things. It is exciting to be able to get to know the grand international institutions.

In front of the UN building, I imagined that one day the world will live as peacefully and as joyfully as all the nations´ flags do together.

Switzerland is a very rich country, with a history I confess I do not know so well. But this visit has made quite curious to study it better. As for Italy, Germany, France, Portugal, Spain etc., their histories were the reason for drawing my interest in visiting them. Whereas Switzerland, it was mainly its rich, organized, diplomatic and peaceful present status, with the cold and the snow, that attracted me.

There is a physics experiment, an **underground ring** with 27 km of circumference, part in France, part in Switzerland, to study the atom. The molecules are accelerated and, as they collide, they break, proving the possibility of even smaller sizes. Isn´t it amazing? But forgive me the physicists for my incapacity of explaining it in a more detailed way. Or else, help me!

Everything is so expensive. A sandwich costs about 20 Reais! It gets dark at around 4 pm and there is no night life, especially in the winter. Swiss people are very beautiful – a German, Italian and French mix – and they have such coldness that discourages any Brazilian...

Something to be admired here is that most people speak at least 3 languages. The main ones are German, Italian and French, each one with the importance and greater use close to its respective borders. Moreover, to those 3 languages you can add up English, well spoken by all youngsters. And mind that I have already complained for having to study Portuguese... Hahaha... Still, similar to the mixture of languages, there is also the cultural interaction among these neighboring nations to Switzerland, what makes this country even more interesting.

As in Germany, the transportation from one city to another is made by trains. Europe, in general, is improving the **railroad transportation**. There are even those who say it will substitute the air one. An example of that is the latest enterprise in Spain, a train with a capacity of up to 350 km per hour! That is, planes will be surely substituted in these places. Again, it is a pity that, in Brazil, the interests of those who profit with road transportation have predominated, rather than the better quality of trains.

Switzerland has implemented **medical stations for the treatment of drug addicts**. These are places where the addicts use drugs and also get all the social assistance, from syringes to psychological treatment. The result has been exciting, with a meaningful reduction in the number of addicts and mainly with drops in the violence and criminality rates. This is a new reason that convinces me to be favorable to a partial legalization concerning drugs. I believe the path is to respect individual freedom of doing whatever one

wants with his own life, but always preserving the individual and collective freedoms (not being affected by the use of another one, not being obliged to pay the treatment of others etc.). Actually, it would be a clear and efficient solution for the decrease of crime and of violence, each time bigger and scarier evils. What do you think about such complicated theme? Is there another viable alternative?

The best of the trip to Switzerland, on the 31st and the 1st, in Zurich, was having met Jero – that fellow Brazilian countryman with whom I initially shared a flat in London, remember? We have updated the news and enjoyed the New Year´s eve party. We saw a very beautiful firework show on the margin of the main lake there and we made the most of the street party, which was pretty good. Wine bottles helped us to diminish the cold. Other two backpackers from Germany, with whom we had made friends in the hostel where we were staying, completed the group.

By the way, it is hard to walk around with Jero and not make new friends with more people. I don´t know any other person who can relate so well and so easily with such different people. This intelligent virtue of relating to diverse folks and making the most of the positive side that each one has, forgetting the flaws, imperfections and differences, is what I admire so much in the personality of this great friend of mine. He really enjoys the moment with whomever is nearby. I remember him when I hear the words by the memorable César Passarinho: "If one alone can party, even better when we are all together!"

We also went to the mountains near the city of Zurich, in the afternoon of the 1st. We found a lot of beauty, cold and snow:

Just like the several hundreds of tourists that were there, we played on the snow, took many photos and got astonished by the indescribable landscapes (or can you describe the photo above with all the merit it deserves?). At the peak of the mountain, with wind and snow, the feeling was interesting. If, on one hand, the cold froze the whole body, on the other, it seemed to me that the magic of that natural phenomenon had also frozen all the evils and sadness of the world. Hence, all in all, the spirit ended up being renewed and purified.

This is how far I will go by now, imagining things about the author of the only book that I am reading during this journey... I do not even know his exact name, but the belief in the most convincing assumptions will be the highest reach of human imagination... What do you think about this reflection on **God and religion**? Will it be an impossible mystery to be revealed? It seems right that we will go back to the same place where we came from. But what about the details? Who can kill this curiosity of mine?

How was your New Year´s eve??? What are the plans for the next 12 months? And for 5, 10 and 30 years' time?

Let us talk after the stroll around Italy, Tião Vicente.

10/01/2005

23h15min

Bon Giorno!

Venice is an island full of canals, with 60 000 inhabitants. As it is all over **ITALY**, it is full of tourists. Since the beginning of the 20th century, it has 23 centimeters less of land in relation to the water level. The originality of the gondolas gives a special romantic atmosphere to the city. There are many stores of art crafts, masks and costumes for the carnival of Venice, which lasts 3 weeks.

When I arrived in the city, on a Sunday morning, soon I felt the remarkable Italian religiosity. There were lots and lots of bells chiming all at the same time. In order to get to my hostel, I caught a boat and crossed The Grand Canal, which cuts Venice in half. I heard the bells chiming throughout all the way! Soon after I got the leaflets and folders on the tourist information, it was all confirmed: there were many churches on the map. *Mamma mia*, such a religious, conservative, superstitious people!

The city is original indeed, there is nothing quite like it on the Planet. The Basilica is unimaginable, there is no way to describe it, but I took several photos to show it to you. Venice has its main square flooded during approximately 250 days per year! And to think that the people from Porto Alegre complain about the floods in this state capital... Laughing... **Venice is a city with no streets and no cars** (can you believe it?), but with gondolas and canals. I guess I would not like to live for too long in a place like that, but the visit for a few days or weeks is marvelous.

I am becoming a specialist in bread, pastrami or ham or salami, and cheese. With prices that scary any Brazilian, I go to supermarkets to buy the food and, mystery, guess what I buy??

Verona has the Arena as its main attraction. Currently, it´s one of the best preserved Roman amphitheaters there is. It receives tourists daily, and it is also the stage of operas in the summer, with a capacity for 22 000

people. I liked to see Juliet´s balcony, the most famous Shakespearean heroine. On the walls of the place there are hundreds of loving messages. People go to the balcony and take pictures, make movies, make wishes and promises:

It seems to me that my mother´s ancestors left Verona and came towards Brazil. But that´s all I know. It is such a pity. Italians like fashion very much. They are vain. As for sunglasses styles, jewelry and fur coats, I think no one beats them. This is an interesting difference from the Germans and the Spanish, who care more about their houses and gardens.

It was in Bologna that the first university in Europe was founded. The ancient lecture room is still preserved, with almost 1000 years! The modern university was created in 1800 and has grown a lot since then.

If you compare, we can realize how late we are: the first Brazilian college was just created in 1827, in the center of the country, teaching only Law and obtaining as a result the education of state bureaucrats...

Nowadays, Bologna is a rich city, full of university students, with a historical and preserved city center, composed of old buildings, truly pieces of art by architects who, during centuries, made efforts to innovate. Their creativity can be noticed, despite the tragic destruction deriving from World War II. In old downtown, the sidewalks are the verandas of the buildings. Walking in a place like this is like traveling in time. Moreover, guess where the delicious Bolognese food is from?

I didn't have a very pleasant night in the hostel where I stayed. I arrived exhausted, willing to relax and to sleep, but I had to put up with an Italian guy who was on an LSD trip, seeing elephants around the room. Just imagine the situation! This is one of the reasons why I only recommend this kind of lodging for those who able "to pay twice the **attention**". They must be attentive especially with women who travel by themselves.

As I travel from town to town, I´ve observed the people on the train stations. I get so happy whenever I see a smile killing the anxiety of the waiting time when someone arrives. With a heavy heart, I see the kisses and the hugs or unhappy expressions on the farewells. And there are also those who, like me, are alone, experiencing the emotion of others to spice up life interactions. It seems to me that the essence of human relations is feelings and emotions.

Italians are really crazy about Ferrari. Italy, especially Naples, is quite disorganized, an anarchy. But it works. I loved the Italian proverb "life´s too short to drink bad wine". It is a pity it was exposed in wine stores, where the best wines are usually the most expensive ones.

Florence is beautiful, extremely beautiful! It is there where almost all the pieces of work of the greatest Italian painters are, such as Da Vinci and Michelangelo. There are several art galleries, all very busy, with long lines to go in. And, as in Italy you have to pay an entrance fee in all the places, the solution is to pick just some.

The Central Duomo of Florence is impressive. It must have about 100 meters of length, about 50 of height and not less than 30 of width. I am not

sure, but the whole structure seems to have been made of marble. It is widely detailed and carved. Those who wish to may observe the construction carefully during several days, always discovering something new. In the center of the town, there are carriages pulled by horses, which are taxis for the tourists. It is quite nice. Until then, I had only seen visitors pay to be transported by tricycles.

The Central Market of Florence looks like the Public Market of any big city. But there are pigeons flying amid cheeses and salamis, old "nonos" (grandpas) who wait on you while they drink some wine and hear the complaints from the "nonas" (grannies), beggars eating pizza and talking on the cell phones, people talking 50 meters away from each other, but seeming to understand one another etc. There are so many voices being heard at the same time that it gives the impression that the walls are speaking as well. It is a chaos and general confusion. 20 minutes in there make you dizzy, even though the facial expression of Italians is one of pure satisfaction and content. Well, there are hundreds of small stalls that sell everything. Everything: from salami to wine, passing by cheeses. And as a salesman said to me, "everything that an Italian needs you will find here. All the rest is luxury!" Hahaha...

There are several old bridges over River Arno. The "Ponte Vecchio" has three floors, where the stores are and jewelry is sold nowadays. That´s it: There is a shopping mall over the bridge! It was fun to see a monument full of padlocks. For Italy's superstitious people (110% of the population), they keep eternal love. I laughed a lot when I read the wishes and messages left together with the padlocks on the bridge. I imagined that God must not be as busy in the rest of the world as he is in Italy... Hahaha...

To go from Florence to Rome, the trains usually take 1h15min. In order to pay half the price of the ticket, I caught one that took 03h30min. It must have stopped in every little town on the way. A whistle stop train. Great! I spent less and traveled more. Ah! The most beautiful brunettes of the world are in Italy! *Ecco*!! After an artistic exhibition the Italians give the artist a round of applause and everybody competes at the same time to see who

shouts the loudest "belo, belíssimo! Bravo! Brraavvvvíííííííííssimoo!!!!"

All roads lead to Rome. And those who have good taste go there as well! That is an extremely beautiful city. The history of the Roman Empire gets thrilling when you visit the centenary, some millenary buildings. The ruins are spread all over the city. Together with London, Paris, Barcelona and Prague, Rome is among the five cities I have been to and that I liked the most. Whether it is for their history, culture, beauty, well-organized present, great infrastructure, these European cities are the ones I would elect as the best ones that I have visited. If someone decides to travel out of the blue (instead of buying a new car... What about that?) to Europe, **this is the itinerary I would recommend** with greater emphasis.

The hostel where I stayed in Rome is the best one I have been to up to now. In 2003, it was chosen the best one of the Planet, in a poll that I don´t know of. I asked the attendant if it was very dangerous to walk on the streets of Rome during the night. She said that I was Brazilian and that my camera was not a digital one, so I shouldn't worry about that. See? Things are going from bad to worse...

In the Italian traffic, drivers who honk a lot certainly get a discount on the income tax. That can only be it. What a neuroses! Laughter... By the way: I have to thank McDonald's. During all these months traveling, it has been fundamental. Not for the food, but for the free restrooms... It's great that there are McDonald's everywhere!

Among the rich European countries, I think Italy is the one that has the greatest number of homeless people. But I am sure that these excluded folks have or have had the opportunity of not being on the streets. Ah! I am sick of sandwiches. I miss the food from home. Today, I only didn´t exchange a finger for a plate of black beans, rice, eggs and steak because I didn´t find the dish!

The Coliseum is impressive. Historically, it has been the setting of cruelties, crimes and violence. When we incorporate the facts of its past and walk around this immense construction of rocks, we get shivers on the spine.

That is another thing that books cannot provide. Unfortunately, there are still coliseums spread around the world, in which people are obliged to struggle for survival. They do not live, but fight, strive, and survive. Do you know anyone?

The Venice Square, in downtown Rome, is one of the places of greatest beauty that I have been to. Observe that the very tall trees, at the back on the right of the photo, do not get even to half the height of the construction (of pure art):

Rome has several fountains spread around the city, with monuments and sculptures covered by water. They are beautiful and refresh the environment. I loved the parks of the Italian capital, such as the *Pincio*, which have a panoramic view of the city. The ruins of the Roman Empire decorate the Italian capital everywhere. It is quite interesting to see its history. The night in Rome is excellent, with very nice pubs, bars and nightclubs, but it wouldn't be the same without the quite gorgeous Italian women, gorgeous indeed!!!

I visited the **VATICAN**, but I didn't have time to talk to the pope. Maybe next time, laughter... The Basilica of the Vatican, on São Pedro

square, has its inside with the greatest wealth and beauty compared to all the places that I have ever visited (the Catholic Church took the best material they have found around the planet over there...). And mind that in the latest months of my trip I certainly have entered in more churches than the Pope himself! The tower, the gardens and the catacombs are also great attractions. Of course I sent a postcard of John Paul's home to my grandpa.

I read on the internet that G7 gave moratorium to the Asian countries struck by the tsunami. That means this was already possible even before the tragedy, since this has not changed anything in the rich countries. Hence, I ask myself: the poverty, the misery and the chaos in which they were immerged in before the tsunami weren´t enough for them to get the moratorium??? This omission and inhumane disinterest of the rich towards the poor are a supreme cruelty!

In the hostel in Rome, I met a Canadian taking his master degree in his country. We talked during hours and drank a lot of still mineral water, unrefrigerated. I get more excited each day to do my doctorate in quality of life in Canada. Who knows? Perhaps not in a very distant future. I am already building the opportunity, but there is still a long time, I know. By the way: the story of the mineral water was a joke... Hahaha...

A scooter with 3 people, 2 dogs and a chair. This is the best description of Naples. It is a total madness. The streets full of vendors are like true ant nests, where cars, scooters and people fight for the same space. I remembered our neighbor Paraguay. In Naples, the one who finds a car which is not dented gets an award! Hahaha...

I´ve been thinking about the expression that we often use: "He/She does not know what to do with his/her life". Don´t you think that we usually look for something or someone who tells us the way rather than the way itself? And sometimes we are even more wrong, when we mix up something or someone with the way itself, another one than ourselves... Does it make any sense to you? If it doesn't, no problem. It would be just other trip thoughts.

After visiting Rome, the beauty of the old buildings of Naples is not so impressive. The culture, the behavior, the warmth of human relations, the people´s temperament and the (dis) organization end up being the interesting feature.

At the first night I went out in Rome, I met Raffaella, a student of Arts at the University there. She and her group of friends were very cheerful, good-humored, kind, friendly, hospitable and intelligent. Amid some good wine, fun talk and the classes they were giving me about Italy and the Italian culture, we soon became friends. I spent 4 days and nights with them in Rome, and Raffaella accompanied me in 2 other days around Naples. It was a wonderful time when, besides the extremely pleasant company, I had a great guide. Always well-supplied with pizzas, cheese, salami and wine, we´ve lived a little the Neapolitan madness, breathing in the super informal atmosphere of southern Italy.

The high point of this visit was to spend a day in **Herculaneum**, a city buried by the Vesuvius volcano. 2000 years ago, due to its sudden and unexpected eruption, the inhabitants of this city (then with approximately 5000 people, many of them rich) died because of the heat or did not escape from the volcanic lava. Archeologists started to excavate the place in 1735, as a result, today, the city is again "above ground level". I am still astonished by this visit. It is something unbelievable. It was a day that will always be among the most interesting ones of all my life for sure: to walk around the city that was totally buried for more than 1700 years, to know the brilliant work of the archeologists (whose accurateness was such that they found a boat with 70 skeletons of noble people who were running away with coins in their pockets), to see the pictures preserved on the walls of the houses, paintings, sculptures, monuments, a stove (!) still in a good condition, among so many other things. Can you believe that?!

Something simple, but curious, is that in Italy people say "tchau" to say "hi". And when they say "goodbye" they also say "tchau". The Italians, three times world champions, surely love football and have it as their favorite sport. In Naples, Maradona is the great idol. He played in the city for

several seasons, and, today, his name, his image and many autographs are all over the place.

Well, I am writing at Gatwick airport, in London. At the night of the 13th to the 14th of January I slept here, lying down on a bench and holding my suitcases very tight. It´ll have been 15 hours and a half waiting to get the plane to go to Kingston, in Jamaica. And check out the change: from a night with a temperature below zero in London to a day of almost 40ºC in Kingston! This journey has really been a dream...

Arrivederci! Tião Vicente.

31/01/2005

18h05min

On the way from London to Kingston, the plane shook and trembled a lot. I didn't look out the window to see on which street we were riding, but it must´ve been full of potholes like the ones from Ijuí are...

Even though it was winter in **JAMAICA**, the temperature was like summertime in Brazil. As I was used to the cold and always rainy climate of London, I got sunburnt very quickly under the Kingston's sun. The heat is such that you can drink, drink and keep drinking and you don't feel like going to the toilet (although the restrooms were clean, fortunately, similar to almost all the other touristic places, except many of the Brazilian ones...). It was a wonderful sensation when I felt the wind and the breeze of the night of a hot country. It is great to find the heat, the sun, the beach, and, in a way, the 3rd world again. It felt like home.

Jero and I rented a van and hired a guide to go across Jamaica, getting to know the island and its paradises. We went all around the seaside of the country. We left from Kingston, going to Montego Bay and Negril around the north coast, coming back through the south coast.

Jamaica has an enormous social inequality, with lots of sport cars driving amid such misery. A curious difference is that the hills there are not

full of slums, but mansions. That´s it. The rich are running away towards the hills, where they build their mansions. As Jamaica is a land "with no laws", even worse than Brazil, we can see more clearly the social phenomenon of the rich getting imprisoned behind grids, restricting their freedom to their condominiums. It is a level of inequality and of injustice higher than the Brazilian one.

Everybody in the country is black, to a point that people on the streets were pointing at us and yelling "white men!". Kids were laughing and trying to call our attention, curious about our color, excessively pale after so much time without sunbathing, in Europe. At first, I got scared. But as I looked around and saw no caldron, I got calm again... Hahaha...

Jamaica is quite disorganized, believe it or not. Interesting: you do not hear foreign music. The radios only play the music from there, especially reggae. Jamaican women are gorgeous. But in this category (I surely write this with an enormous joy), after this trip round the planet, I have come to the conclusion that *gauchas* are really unbeatable. The island of reggae has prohibitive prices to tourists. It is more expensive than the United Kingdom or Switzerland, the countries with the higher **prices** of Europe.

Tourists are fiercely competed by taxi drivers, tourist guides, sales people, beggars, thieves, tricksters, curious people and others. Everyone wants to snatch money from visitors, even grabbing them to get "more attention". Sugarcane is the main Jamaican economic activity. Several buildings, houses or even shacks in slums are painted in a very colorful way. Perhaps this demonstrates the life and the joy of Jamaican people, who apparently suffer so much.

The museum of Bob Marley is the simplest one I have ever been to. In a way, it depicts the simplicity of the life and of the personality of the artist. It is located in the house Bob lived at when he was already famous. I don't know if there ever was another artist who has contributed as much for Arts and lived in such a simple place. By the way, Bob's jeep is still at the patio of his house:

On a beach in Montego Bay, Jero and I have been "welcomed" by two young drug dealers who claimed they were the kingpins of the place. They were smart. We talked about politics, football, drugs, the relation between Jamaica and Brazil etc. They said they would spend the day taking drugs from the hill to the beach, to bars and everywhere in town. They explained they wouldn't kill anyone, they did not have guns, they wouldn't stab or rob, but drug dealing was the only option in such a poor country, with no industries and jobs. In the end, we couldn't leave the place without paying a "commission" for the use of "their" beach, who used Bob Marley's words "one love, one heart" to claim they were "peaceful". What are your own impressions and conclusions about this fact?

Jamaican beaches are beautiful indeed. The country is aimed at tourism. Tourists search for rest, peace, beauty and heat:

Just between us, Brazilians, aren't our beaches as beautiful as well? Well then. Traveling around so many different countries, I can see clearly now **our Brazil** is really a tropical paradise. And foreigners know that. However, they don't visit Brazil because they are afraid of so much violence – for a long time with numbers of a Civil War (!!!!) –, crime, lack of safety and of structure for tourism (information, traffic signs, special programs, people with specialized education, clean toilets etc.). Once we get to solve these sad and shameful problems, we will certainly be one of the most sought for destinations by tourists from all over the world. This might be our industry in the future. But what future is this? What time is this??? It is up to us to determine that.

Jamaica is the poorest country I've ever visited. It is inevitable that tourists lose their patience, facing disorganization, corruption, poor infrastructure, ignorance etc., even when they previously know the country is like that. Whoever stays in good hotels and do tourist programs do not find the greatest problems. But those who try to know Jamaica's real situation can see something scary, saddening and very disappointing. People grabbing your arm, intimidating you, trying to get any cent from you at any

cost is really annoying. But to know they do that out of misery, hunger and despair breaks anyone's heart that is a little bit of sensitive. I was even trying to avoid people such was the impact of the tragedy found. For how long will our human ignorance still dominate, to a point where people don't have their fundamental rights like housing, food, health, education, safety and freedom? I want to be still alive when this happens. I also intend to be proud of having contributed in the best way I can for such (re) evolution.

Jamaica is so small that the flight from Kingston to Montego Bay was so quick that we didn't have time to recline the seat. The take-off and landing procedures were joined together.

Finally, whoever wants to know a place with legalized drugs mustn't go to Amsterdam, but go to Bob Marley's land. In Jamaica, everything is morally allowed by everybody, although drugs and prostitution are prohibited by law. All in all, laws and reality of poor countries don't coincide. That´s it, mates. After this visit to Jamaica, even knowing the European way of life now, I miss Brazil like never before!

It is a pity I didn't manage to take as many photos of Jamaican life. The problem was it was not possible to use the camera without being noticed. Thus, markets and shops behind grids, infinite misery on the streets, behaviors, situations and unforgettable folks are only registered in my memory. It doesn't mean people couldn't see me taking pictures, but, amid so much misery, a white tourist with a camera is an enemy target and an easy catch for thieves. Moreover, when I tried to register something interesting, I was surrounded by Jamaicans who, not being so friendly, asked me if I really wanted to take pictures of their misery. So I put the camera away, explained it and went away...

Farewell to Jamaicans: with respect, Tião Vicente.

14/02/2005

19h06min

Ha! Haa! Haaaaa, great Cuba!

From the start, I anticipate that the vast and charming culture is worth the visit to **CUBA**, even for those who aren't interested in its political and social aspects. All in all, there is handicraft, painting and music everywhere. As there is so much Art and joy, we see the city of Havana as a quite colorful one. Nevertheless, the camera shows another view, which Fidel would claim to be a capitalist one:

Among them, everything is the same: everyone is poor. But they're polite, disciplined, cult and educated poor people, with total and free access to health and to education, with simple housing. They lose weight in leaner times more than in the normal Regime. There is no misery.

I read in a museum that even the USA and the UN recognized that Cuba eradicated illiteracy in 1961, only 2 years after the Revolution! Only this fact was a revolution inside another one... I heard from Pablo, a Cuban who didn't like the Regime, that each district has a specialist physician and

therefore there are no lines or waiting time in their health care system. Another Cuban, a master in architecture, told me there is no college entrance exam and that everybody has a guaranteed vacancy for all the years of school, graduation, master and doctor degrees without having to pay for it etc.

A worker of a cigar factory told me that 70% of the population has got a graduation. He also said that the government calculated that, so as to produce all the goods that the Cuban society consumes, each Cuban needs to work only 3 hours a day. And so they do it, with no unemployment rates. The other 21 hours per day remaining to each citizen, discounting the time of sleep, end up being dedicated to several activities, especially arts and sports. This would be the explanation for the Island to have, in Olympic Games, minding the proportion of its size and number of inhabitants, so many more medals than any other country, including the USA.

I don't know if all this information is correct. But tell me what you think: if someone determined that 90% of Brazilians with less money had to choose between A) to keep on living in Brazil and, hence, be free to travel abroad and come back whenever they wanted to, OR B) to move to live in another country from where they could not leave, but where they would in fact have thorough access to health care, education, housing, food, jobs, leisure, safety, social security pension and social welfare. Which would be the choice of the majority of the Brazilian population?

That is why I have never asked myself so often: **what is poverty** after all**?**

Another ultra-polemic question: what if all the human beings on the Planet had thorough and dignified access to every one of the fundamental rights above mentioned, as long as they could not leave the world???

In Cuba, according to what I noticed, everybody loves the effort by the government in building a safe, healthy, educated, with no hunger, artistic and athletic place. However, the great majority of the population

condemns and hates the way it is done, mainly in relation to restriction to freedom.

These are different values from the capitalist world. By the way, let me show you a new poem of trips. It involves a laid-back reflection about values:

Consent to Horror

It was an afternoon of a cold night
The ice of the sun, to the moonlight it stared.
The birds swam restless
And the fish flew around.
Nobody understood what was going on
But asked nothing.

Soon it only sounded weird
But terror didn't scare any longer.
They said it used to be like this.
And that another world wouldn't do.
Thus, who came out of the cave,
In the bonfire or insane would end up.

And it was the time
It could've only been
All went back to normal little by little.
What is time?
What is effect?
Till today, not even it explained.

It's only known that, since then
Order was forgotten
Reason unobserved
Nothing is misplaced
The world doesn't seem to be topsy-turvy
Even war is justified.

I keep asking myself
If there was reason in the world
Wool is worth less than gold
What in life is a treasure?
Diamonds are merely an image

And it is clothes that warm us up.

A world with crime and misery
Where life is worth nothing
Evolve to extinguish
Power to suppress
Well-being is the right of a few
More and more I understand less and less.

In Cuba there are homeless people with a college degree. This is great because it shows that education there is available to everyone, but awful because it sentences some to unemployment and poverty. By the way, those homeless are not less favored than the other inhabitants of the Island. The only difference is that they wish to have a higher income than the little that everybody has, and, therefore, they submit themselves to beg tourists for money, getting euros and dollars, much more valuable currencies around there.

Another curios observation: as Cuban people almost do not leave the Island, people from other countries with whom they have contact with end up being the tourists. Hence, the population of this temple of revolutionaries thinks that all the rest of the world live their days with the same beauty, free time and tranquility as of the life of a tourist...

Foreigners get there and ask only about Cuba, while Cubans talk about it and pour out their hearts... When I noticed that, I started telling them about the world out there. I told them that in other places there are billions of people starving to death, who have no home, health care, nor education, who walk on the streets with no safety, who have no job, nor welfare or social assistance... To my astonishment, they would get surprised! Many did not know that! They thought the rest of the world lived as well as tourists and that only Cubans suffered! It is a place one must know! And soon, after Fidel dies, fortunately or unfortunately, like it or not, no one will be able to see, with their own eyes and mind, this "other world".

There are two currencies: The Cuban Peso and the Convertible Cuban Peso. The first one is exclusive to Cubans and the second one destined to tourists. 26 of the first one are necessary to buy 01 of the second. And

prices might be paid simply in "pesos", either one or the other, depending if the payer is Cuban or tourist. In other words, foreigners pay much more for the same product, while natives sell products and services to visitors and get their currencies and exchange it for theirs, getting 26 times more. That was what different people explained to me around there.

The great majority of cars were already used before the Revolution, which occurred in 1959. They are old, very old Fords and Chevrolets (the people must have accurate knowledge of mechanics!), which pollute a lot and never exceed the speed limit. By the way, the Cuban population does not usually exceed their quite limited limits. And those who do pay extremely long and severe penalties, many times for life or death. This is according to Cubans themselves. They also tease, saying that Havana has two million inhabitants, out of which half are police officers. The number is great indeed. There is almost no crime, drug dealing, etc. Awesome. Streets are safe 25 hours a day.

The Cuban population looks a lot like Brazilians in the physical aspect. There are black, dark and white people. If marriage were something rational and not emotional, I would go there to get married. Women are quite beautiful, they live a simple life, with no luxury, are very polite, educated, athletic, almost all of them have artistic gifts, have a good sense of humor, are talented and can leave the Island if they get married to a foreigner! Doesn't it sound perfect?

As the communist regime has its foundation on Lenin's and Marx's ideas and, therefore, they are atheistic, so there are not many religious people in Cuba. Still, they say this number has increased after the Pope John Paul II visited the Island in the end of the 90's. At least since then, they started to celebrate Christmas, with the permission from the government.

Many people stop the tourists on the streets to beg for money, to sell something, or just to talk. As I wanted to know the Cubans' Cuba and not the one for tourists, I stopped several times to see what it was about. On January 21, a guy came to talk to me about some things and after asked me to exchange some money so that he could run away from the Island and go

to live with all his family in Miami. Touched by the repression towards the population, I believed in him and exchanged 50 euros for Cuban pesos. As you are already imagining, it was a scam. The money I got in exchange had been falsified. Well, I hope the criminal has really spent the euros to stay together with his family.

In the end, Jero and I ended up walking around Havana in the police car to look for the guy. We knew we wouldn't find him, but we did not miss the chance of riding around the city with the "lawmen". Looking on the bright side of what happened, I got to know Cuban's situation better, including the criminal scam, the ride on the "police taxi" and the police system itself. Well, I´m not so sad, since I´m an expert in being robbed (Brazilian experiences!). The funniest of all is to hear Jero making fun of it and singing Bezerra da Silva: "malandro é malandro e mané é mané, diga lá... (a rogue is a rogue and a moron is a moron, spill it out"

On January 23rd, Jero and I experimented what the restriction to freedom is like in the Cuba of Fidel. We met José, a young Cuban of 27 years old, married and with a 9-year-old son, architect graduated in the University of Havana, who worked rolling cigars and was also a tourist guide, among other small jobs. On the 22nd, we strolled around the capital, had dinner in a restaurant for Cubans, went to a club, talked a lot and we even managed to exchange clothes for cigars. On the 23rd, we were on a beach near Havana, sunbathing, relaxing on the sand, drinking rum and talking calmly, when the police came and asked for José's documents. As no Cuban may talk for too long to tourists, our acquaintance was cuffed and arrested. We could not do anything and then just went back to the hotel.

At that moment, we experimented the restriction to freedom of a dictatorship. It is prohibited and it is a crime when human beings talk, just because they have different nationalities. It was a terrible shocking experience. I hope José has not been tortured, which is a usual practice in the dictatorial Regimes, as it was the Brazilian one for a long time.

Another experience that is worth to be reported was when we entered a bar for Cubans – and not for tourists. We ordered local typical drinks, we

paid some measures to Cubans who were there and, all of a sudden, there was a group of natives surrounding us and asking for us to pay some drinks for them as well. When the situation seemed as if it would be out of control, we said we would call the police. Believe it or not: in a few seconds the bar was almost empty. Can you notice the repression to these people? In Brazil, "I´ll call the police!" our "I´ll sue you!" do not intimidate anyone, the only one that works is "I´ll tell everything to the drug lord!"...

Among other things, these learning moments reinforce my certainty that good health, education, food and housing do not compensate the lack of freedom. And nothing pays off. Simply because starting from freedom, all the other fundamental rights are conquered. Incidentally, let us make it clear that in the capitalist world freedom only exists, in fact, for a small minority... Or does anyone think that, for example, most Brazilians are free?

We, from the capitalist world, have got a lot to learn from Cubans. We are not perfect, as they are not either. And let us **not be hypocrite in defending that the lack of freedom exists in a purposeful way while misery is an inherent evil to human nature**. We well know that both are predominant characteristics of the communist and capitalist world, respectively, for pure political will. Right?

Maybe only **God** would be able to construct a world in this middle ground. Hence, as He is in each one of us, let us move, good folks! **If each prayer means a good deed, we will change the world**. And God, who is good, will be more present in each one of us! I don´t believe we are so lazy as to spend life asking Him to settle things, while we can do that... Or let's at least share the work: for each prayer, at least one good deed! And in this sense: how come some pray only for others to pray? I wonder what the world would be like if nobody believed in God nor in life after death. Would we live in what we believe Hell is or would we start building Heaven in this very world? The only thing I know is that the Universe waits for the decision and attitude of human beings...

Once again, I claim that my **ideal of a world with equality of opportunities** is absolute. A world where everyone has the same chances

and access to fundamental assets and values, where people care for quality of life, where human beings are superior to economics and where some cannot restrict the freedom of many, where it is not acceptable there to be misery to provide wealth and the restriction (disproportionally unjustified) of rights such as health care, education, housing, food and free will impossible.

I emphatically deny capitalist terror and misery as I condemn communist dictatorship. As, to tell you the truth, both Regimes have got all these characteristics. I dream of a democracy in which everybody participates decisively. This one, therefore, quite different from American "democracy" (that one in which not everyone has the vote with the same weight and which, nevertheless, calls itself the "greatest" democracy...). And this is a sketch of the ideal that guides the life of my supreme sociopolitical dream: Imagine and "join us, and the world will live as one", J. Lennon teaches us.

In Cuba, I was driven by the following reasoning: **live for nothing**. **And do everything to live**. Instead of living to work, consume, love etc., work, consume and love to live. How does it sound?

Finally, the Cuban courage is praiseworthy: A poor, cult and small island that, in spite of everything, challenges the unbeatable power and resists to the dissimulated capitalist terror. If everyone struggled against injustice, misery and ignorance with the same determination, every being would be dignified and free. A register of this bravery are the mirrored billboards spread around the streets of Cuba, like the following one ("This Island will never surrender" – and a Jurassic car passing in front of it):

A brotherly, sympathetic, equal and free hug,

Tião Vicente.

03/02/2005

18h26min

The fame that **Buenos Aires i**s the most European of the Latin-American cities is real. Its architecture reminds us of some European styles. Its wide and wooded avenues were probably inspired by the ones in Paris and in Barcelona. There are several cultural events in the city, most of the times related to tango. However, the behavior of many Argentinians, as if they were rich people from the 1st world, highlighting despise for the roots and reality of South-Americans, is slightly arrogant and it expresses ignorance.

Hombre de Dios, the beauty of the Castellanas, with a different style from Brazilian women, has again increased my belief in God in relation to the amino acid theory. Perfections like these don't let me believe that a soup on the high seas was the origin of such a perfect world... Laughter...

As soon as I got to Buenos Aires, I had barbecue as soon as I could since I missed eating red meat a lot, after so much time eating basically rice, pasta, potatoes and sandwiches. The problem was that the *hermanos* poisoned me and I ended up with food poisoning. As a result, I spent most of the time in the toilet rather than in the bedroom of the hostel where I stayed in, hahaha...

Now, already in **IJUÍ**, I'm resting and recovering myself to face the long marathon of carnival, which is about to start in a few hours. But it was the right time to get sick, if there is such a thing. I am home and, of course, there is nothing better than your mom's lap, your family's care, the brotherhood of your friends and the comfort of your own home to cure every and any illness... It sounds like a movie, but it is true. I got sick just when I came back to the same "cradle" from where I left in the beginning of this great trip!

It is as if my body knew that I was traveling with no **health care plan**, no insurance, and no **specialized support**. My **trip** was **independent** in several senses. I could not get sick. I had to hang on and learn. The intense and profound experiences have surely provided me an existential richness that a simple exchange program does not give. Well, in this case, travelers leave home with an issued visa, arranged accommodation, studies hired in partnerships, contacts, scholarships, company and a similar structure to your own mother's lap...

With such intense experiences, I take the risk of using the phrase from the autobiography by the master Pablo Neruda: "I confess that I have lived". But, today, I start considering the high risks that I took and, thus, my **advice** to backpackers, learners and adventurous beginners ends up being the following: seize the comfort of an exchange program with a good structure (if possible), once the experience per se already gives you the opportunity of a considerable personal and professional development. It is better if the so called existential growth comes little by little, without much haste, with confidence. The world is beautiful, but inevitably dangerous. The most risky adventures must be taken slowly.

Any dictionary teaches that this kind of **program** is an exchange indeed, a reciprocal relation, which can be cultural, informational, among nations, peoples, institutions, families, and people, among others. It can also be an activity of those who travel alone, get information and only then make this experience have its effects, for instance, through an available writing to whoever is interested, as it is my case. The easiest one is certainly the academic exchange, with the support from universities, language schools, travel agencies. It is only a matter of will and time.

Money is not a problem. For those who don't have any, be it by their own resources or through scholarships (as far as I know, these ones do not exist only for writers!), it can only be obtained through a loan, paying it with the **work** to be carried out abroad – and it is well paid to support the **expenses** of a traveler. Students usually have a visa to work for 20 hours a week, there are always vacancies for simple jobs and the respective pay should be enough to cover their costs. A student abroad spends something around 850 euros per month, while the payment is about 10 euros per hour. It is a basic reasoning that most of the times is not done: someone who works 40 hours a week in Brazil might make less than that in other countries, having even more time to have fun...

Well, there are many opportunities. The **important thing is to make up your mind about traveling**. Afterwards, everything will be all right. Having in mind that everyone has the same 24 hours every day, that our sleep and other common things demand around 10 hours a day from us and that work and transportation take another 10, it gets easier to notice that these **remaining 4 hours** are the ones that we should concentrate our energy and creativity on so as to overcome obstacles, bureaucracy and "competition"... Most of the times, it is the good management of these remaining 4 hours that allows us to beat limiting barriers of people´s dreams. I mean, it is obvious that whoever decides to travel and to live intensely will find some constraints. But all of them may be overcome. Life is enough (initials VIDA in Portuguese which means life as well): **V**ontade (will), **I**niciativa (initiative), **D**ecisão (decision) and **A**titude (attitude).

And it couldn't be different. Our society is like this. For example, when someone decides to get married, there is bureaucracy, notice of marriage, qualification, planning. But the big step is to decide, isn't it? It is the same with the decision of traveling and carrying it out. Of course that, comparing to getting married, putting an end to a trip and coming back home is much simpler than ending a marriage... Laughter... I liked this comparison so as to motivate you to travel: whoever is able to plan as well as to execute a wedding can also go on a great trip! To travel is to be on a honeymoon with the world!

All jokes aside, I notice that the Planet has been changing a lot. The means of communication and of transport have developed so much that we cannot catch up any longer. Now the ways are coming to us. The internet is placing the universe inside our houses. The **frontiers** are relatively finishing. Opportunities are already waiting for us. **English, trips, exchange programs are already a necessary path to personal, professional, existential education and for inclusion in international society**. All of us, **citizens of the world**, besides the **right**, we already have the **duty of traveling, knowing, accessing this citizenship**. This is something like getting literate in this new communication of the Planet.

Well. As you travel, as you could notice, we get **revolted** with some things and **enchanted** by others. We see injustice, misery, ignorance. We discover infinite **beauties**. **We read** the world. We learn to be more humane. We come upon **alternatives** for our wishes, problems and disillusions. We feel that the one who **helps** gets even happier than the one who was helped. The more we observe the problems of the Planet, the more wrong we wish to be in our conclusions. **We grow** in the personal, professional and existential spheres. One of our greatest wishes becomes the one that everyone gets better than us (we make an effort to do our best). We follow long and beautiful **ways**. We make our **dreams** come true. We multiply **happiness**. We conquer **freedom**. We shield ourselves with **peace** and **love**. We qualify our terrestrial **adventure**. We **live** truly and **intensely**. We find our **reason**.

There are no words capable of describing all the **positive aspects** of this experience of travelling. Only those who travel in this learning way can comprehend that. **The individual conquests are really infinite. The great challenge of each one of these travelers lies on the collective sphere: sharing all these gains with the others**. I intend to carry out small and big actions on behalf of other humans and of nature in general. I´ll intensify my campaign for everyone to travel, since this may be the fastest, most efficient and most fun instrument for us to build a better world indeed. I will support other "Adventurer Learner Backpackers".

During this trip of mine, I´ve contributed observing, learning and writing. I made my writings available to you, aiming to amuse you, to show how Brazilian backpackers who take an adventure abroad live and to demonstrate the importance of hitting the road. I hope you've liked it and, above all, feel greatly motivated to travel. I dearly ask that each learner traveler to also write, to take **caring attitudes** or, at least, to help me share as much as possible all these ideas that I registered here. Thus, each one will do the part that is in their power to **make the world a more natural home, for everyone indeed**.

In a very simple way, thank you all for your participation in this space, that will be used again in the next adventure. In the meantime, I'll live next to my **family** and **friends**, once, most certainly, the place where they live is where we find and build more **happiness and fulfilment**.

And, my friends, I insist: the **Universe is ours! Let´s explore it!**

Traveling is a way to get to know the world, life, other people and yourself better!!

Set your feet and mind on the road!!!

See you around, always!!!!

Hugs and kisses, Tião Vicente.

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