

TUKO PAMOJA ! **photographed by the children of Korogocho**

This photographic book is the fruit of the kids' work in the school of Korogocho. It was born from the idea of casting a glance on the Korogocho reality as seen through its children's eyes.

I immediately found exciting the thought of working together with the kids of the local St. John's School and I took part in the project without hesitation. I involved Gianna, a friend who has been a perfect organizer: a sending of e-mails and from friends and acquaintances we got ideal cameras for the purpose, the so-called "compact", then black/white and colour films... and here we leave for Korogocho!

The group, already formed and anxious to start a new experience, included eleven kids from 14 to 16. I discovered a professional environment and the way the kids understood the message and quickly threw themselves into the objective was astonishing.

Their concept of "photograph" was bound to that of family portrait. Now they had to carry out an introspective work to show us and their friends the meaning of "living in Korogocho", by using two fundamental instruments: their eye and their heart.

The first "school" day we felt all embarrassed: me, since I didn't want to be considered a teacher, and them who, for the first time, had a new instrument in their hands, to work and have fun with. Our embarrassment lasted very little, the tension broke, their attention and curiosity made the rest.

They started telling about their dreams, hopes and ambitions which later became their biography. They learnt how to hold the camera, horizontal and vertical position, framing, how to open the back, put the film inside and look into the camera, in a defined and, until then, unknown space.

We organized three shifts, in order to exchange cameras and films. At the end of each shift we discussed every result, the choice of the framing, the target's closeness to make it present, the correct use of the flash and the caption on the back of each photograph.

An interesting travel was born... a fresh and brilliant one, natural and immediate, essential and simple, typical of kids living their everyday life in such a way.

In the book, the discovery of Korogocho starts from the above. Thousands of metal sheet roofs delimit an imaginary bounding and define the extension of the city. The dark and narrow alleys remind of fear, the inside of the houses recall the drama the kids have to suffer. To be noticed is the detail accuracy in the posters on the walls, in the sheets separating small rooms, in the crochet works decorating the few furnishings. Everything gives calmness, everything is lived with dignity, even by those kids sniffing glue or the man with the umbrella, who has just come out from the dump, showing his smile.

There is hope at Korogocho. It is named School, with its library, dancing course, painting, sport with football, athletics and above all the gym. Redemption of their condition depends on all this, it is the hope of changing their own reality and fighting for a better human condition.

To this hope we always had is due the obstinacy in having carried out the initial promise we made to the kids: the making of this book!