

LONDON, MAY 8, 2006. IT'S A MONDAY. MR. **GUY GOMA** READ IN THE NEWSPAPER THAT THE BBC, THE PUBLIC BRITISH TELEVISION, IS LOOKING FOR AN ELECTRICIAN. SO THIS CITIZEN - ORIGINALLY FROM CONGO - GOES TO THE RECEPTION OF THE BBC IN LONDON BECAUSE HE IS INTERESTED IN THE JOB.

HE CAN'T IMAGINE THAT, A FEW MINUTES LATER, HE WOULD ENTER THE HISTORY OF TELEVISION.

(BBC INTERVIEW TO MR. GUY GOMA)

THE RECEPTION DESK CONFUSES GUY GOMA, ASPIRING ELECTRICIAN, WITH A COPYRIGHT LAW EXPERT, WITH A SIMILAR NAME, WHO WAS SUPPOSED TO APPEAR ON THE SHOW. AND SO LIVE ON AIR, IT ENDS UP BEING HIM: GUY GOMA.

THE STRANGE THING IS THAT THE BBC WON'T HIDE THIS MISTAKE. THEY WON'T SWEEP IT UNDER THE RUG AS PERHAPS SOME ITALIAN TELEVISIONS WOULD HAVE DONE. THE BBC PREPARES A TV SEGMENT TO TELL ABOUT IT, THEIR MISTAKE, TO EXPLAIN HOW IT HAPPENED AND TO APOLOGIZE TO THE VIEWERS.

BBC SPEAKER: "IN FACT, THE RAIL GUY KEWNEY LOOKS LIKE THIS AND IS A REGULAR BBC CONTRIBUTOR. HE WAS SITTING ELSEWHERE AWAITING HIS CALL. BUT A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY, A BIT OF CONFUSION IN RECEPTION. SO OUR MYSTERY MAN ENDING UP IN THE HOT SEAT. AND TO HIS CREDIT, AS THE INTERVIEW CONTINUED, HE HAD A GOOD STAB AT GIVING SOME ANSWERS".

GOOD MORNING, WE ARE THE STUDENTS OF THE LUISS MULTIMEDIA JOURNALISM LAB. THIS PODCAST OF OURS IS ABOUT MISTAKES, PUBLIC ADMISSIONS, SECRET REMOVALS.

THE PODCAST SEEKS TO UNDERSTAND - IN PARTICULAR - HOW NEWSROOMS HANDLE THEIR SVARIONS, IN ITALY AND ABROAD.

SVARIONS THAT HAVE REACHED THE UNBELIEVABLE EVEN HERE AT HOME. IN THE PRESENT AS IN THE PAST.

DRIVER JARNO TRULLI RACED FOR 14 YEARS IN FORMULA 1, ALSO WITH RENAULT, ALSO WITH LOTUS. ON JULY 16, 1998, TRULLI VISITS THE ALCATEL FACTORY, IN BRIANZA.

THE MILAN DAILY NEWSPAPER, WHICH GIVES NOTICE OF THE VISIT, LOOKS FOR THE RIGHT PHOTO. PITY IT GOES TO PRINT AN ARTICLE WITH A PHOTO OF TRULLI. APULIAN TRULLI, THOSE OF ALBEROBELLO.

IN THE BOOK "EYELETS, HEADLINES, DUNCES" - RELEASED BACK IN 2001 - GIACOMO DANESI COLLECTS A GALLERY OF ERRORS, OR RATHER HORRORS, STARRING ITALIAN NEWSPAPERS.

LIKE BRESCIAOGGI, WHICH HEADLINES: "FIVE DEAD ESCAPE IN BOLOGNA, THREE ALREADY CAUGHT".

TODAY, IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA, THE FACEBOOK GROUP UNLIKELY TITLISTS INFORMS OF THE ERRORS THAT PEEP OUT ESPECIALLY ON WEBSITES, ALSO HIGHLIGHTING NEWSSTAND POSTERS THAT GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF THE RELEVANT NEWS OF THE DAY.

THE LATEST LAUGHING POSTERS? "83-YEAR-OLD WOMAN TURNS 100." UNLIKELY TITLIST: SIGN UP FOR THAT TOO.

THE MOST IMPORTANT NEWSROOMS IN THE WORLD HAVE ADOPTED A STYLE GUIDE. STYLE GUIDES SET THE RULES OF GOOD JOURNALISM THAT NEWSROOMS COMMIT TO FOLLOWING. AND SOME RULES SPECIFICALLY DETERMINE HOW A NEWSROOM WILL HANDLE ITS MISTAKES.

WE ARE IN MADRID, NEWSROOM OF EL PAIS, ONE OF THE MOST FOLLOWED NEWSPAPERS AND WEBSITES IN SPAIN AND LATIN AMERICA. EL PAIS' RULES SEEM VERY EFFECTIVE FOR CORRECTIONS ONLINE. A BIT LESS FOR CORRECTIONS IN PRINT. EL PAIS' NEWSROOM COMMITS TO IMMEDIATELY CORRECTING ERRORS FOUND ON ITS WEB ARTICLES, EVEN YEARS AFTER THEIR PUBLICATION. THE ARTICLE - IN A CLEARLY VISIBLE SPOT - WILL DISPLAY A NOTICE. THE NOTICE WILL WARN THE READER THAT THE PIECE HAS BEEN CORRECTED AND REFERS TO THE CORRECTION, LOCATED AT THE END OF THE ARTICLE. THE NEWSROOM WILL NOT ADD ANY COMMENTS TO THE CORRECTION. IN CASE OF AN ERROR IN PRINT, THE CORRECTION WILL APPEAR ON THE OPINION PAGE, AT THE END OF LETTERS TO THE EDITOR. WE DON'T LIKE THIS SOLUTION MUCH BECAUSE THE CORRECTION IS LESS VISIBLE.

BOTH EL PAIS AND THE ASSOCIATED PRESS (IN UNITED STATES) ADMIT TO THEIR MISTAKES WITHOUT RHETORICAL TRICKS, WITHOUT DIMINISHING THEIR OVERSIGHT, WHICH MUST BE ACKNOWLEDGED AND ADMITTED TRANSPARENTLY.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS ALSO REQUIRES ITS JOURNALISTS, CONTRIBUTORS, COLUMNISTS TO IMMEDIATELY NOTIFY SECTION LEADERS OF THEIR ERRORS SO THEY CAN BE CORRECTED. MANY ITALIAN NEWSPAPERS HAVE ETHICAL CODES WHERE THEY COMMIT TO PROMPT ERROR CORRECTION. AND THESE CORRECTIONS SHOULD BE HIGHLIGHTED WITHIN WEB ARTICLES. OUR EXPERIENCE, HOWEVER, TELLS US THAT ITALIAN NEWSROOMS RARELY POINT OUT THEIR MISTAKES.

THEY CERTAINLY INCORPORATE THE CORRECTIONS INTO THE ARTICLES, WHICH ARE THEREFORE MORE ACCURATE AND BALANCED. HOWEVER, THEY RELUCTANTLY HIGHLIGHT THESE ERRORS.

OFTEN INDIVIDUALS, COMPANIES, OR INSTITUTIONS ARE THE SUBJECT OF PARTIAL, INACCURATE, OR EVEN DEFAMATORY INFORMATION. YET ALL THESE ENTITIES GET CORRECTIONS THROUGH FORCEFUL MEANS, ONLY BY EXERCISING THE RIGHT TO RECTIFICATION. ITALIAN LAW ESTABLISHES THAT ANYONE CAN REQUEST IN WRITING THAT A NEWS ITEM BE AMENDED OR CORRECTED, IN A TIMELY AND FREE MANNER. WHEN A NEWSPAPER MAKES A MISTAKE, FOR EXAMPLE, WE CAN SEND A REQUEST FOR CLARIFICATION OF UP TO 30 LINES. THE REQUEST WILL CLEARLY INDICATE WHICH PART OF THE NEWS WE BELIEVE IS WRONG AND MUST NOT CONTAIN INSULTS TOWARDS THE NEWSROOM OR OTHER INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED IN THE MATTER. WHEN A TELEVISION NEWS PROGRAM OR A RADIO NEWS REPORT MAKES AN ERROR, WE CAN REQUEST THAT THE CORRECTION BE BROADCAST WITHIN 48 HOURS OF THE AIRING OF THE DISPUTED NEWS. IF THE TV OR RADIO NEWS PROGRAM CONSIDERS THE RECTIFICATION UNFOUNDED, THIS SUBJECT MUST INFORM THE REQUESTER. NOT ONLY THAT. IT MUST ALSO PRESENT THE MATTER TO THE COMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY (AGCOM). THE AUTHORITY, IN THE ROLE OF ARBITER, WILL DECIDE WHETHER THE CORRECTION SHOULD BE AIRED ON THE TV OR RADIO NEWS PROGRAM. WHEN A WEBSITE MAKES AN ERROR, THE OBLIGATION ALWAYS APPLIES TO PUBLISH THE CORRECTION WITHIN 48 HOURS, WITH THE SAME VISIBILITY AND GRAPHIC PROMINENCE AS THE DISPUTED NEWS.

OUR PODCAST STARTED WITH A POSITIVE EXAMPLE. THE BBC WASN'T AFRAID TO ADMIT THAT AN ELECTRICIAN, BY MISTAKE, ENDED UP LIVE ON TV TALKING ABOUT COPYRIGHT LAW. ITALY ALSO HAS A BEAUTIFUL AND VIRTUOUS EXAMPLE. EVERY YEAR, THE NEWSPAPER LEGGO PUBLISHES AN ARTICLE WHERE IT LISTS THE NEWS IT REPORTED INACCURATELY. A PERHAPS UNIQUE CASE, WHICH HAS DRAWN MUCH AFFECTION TOWARDS LEGGO. LET'S LISTEN TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEWSPAPER.

DAVIDE DESARIO (LEGGO): “IN APRIL 2018, I WAS ASKED TO LEAD LEGO, A FREE DAILY PAPER DISTRIBUTED IN ROME AND MILAN, WITH A NEWS WEBSITE THAT IS AMONG THE MOST READ IN ITALY. I IMMEDIATELY REALIZED ONE THING: THE LEGO NEWSPAPER WAS TRULY A FRIEND TO ITS READERS, LIKE NEVER BEFORE IN MY CAREER. SO, I DECIDED TO DO THIS. I TOOK A NOTEBOOK AND BEGAN TO JOT DOWN THE MISTAKES MADE IN THE PRINT NEWSPAPER AND ON THE WEB. AT THE SAME TIME, WE ALSO DID ANOTHER THING SPECIFICALLY ON THE WEB. WE TRY TO CORRECT ERRORS IN A VERY SIMPLE WAY, NOT PRETENDING NOTHING HAPPENED. WHEN THERE'S A MISTAKE ON ITS WEBSITE, THE EDITORIAL TEAM OFTEN THINKS IT'S NOT THAT SERIOUS. THEY CONSIDER A MISTAKE IN THE PRINT EDITION MORE SERIOUS BECAUSE THE ERROR REMAINS UNCHANGED ON PAPER. THEY THINK AN ERROR ON WEBSITE IS LESS SERIOUS BECAUSE THEY CAN ALWAYS CORRECT IT. NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH. A MISTAKE ON THE INTERNET IS MUCH MORE SERIOUS BECAUSE OF SCREENSHOTS, BECAUSE THE ERROR CAN GO VIRAL. OFTEN, AN ONLINE MISTAKE CAN PROVE TO BE A FAR MORE POWERFUL BOOMERANG”.