



WORLD FLASHES

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fragmented notes from personal experiences - Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo

MOST NEEDED: A POST-COLD WAR AGENDA! This was the message that already a year ago the InterAction Council of Former Heads of Government addressed to the Summit of the 7 most industrialized countries and to the main leaders of the world. The events of the last months give added weight to that alert signal. Dramatic sea changes ask for a totally new perspective in the world global strategy and goals. The disappearance of the old antagonism between the two blocks leaves many politicians and political analysts empty-handed. In the conflict over the independence of Lithuania the Western countries have done their utmost to refrain from any action which would destabilize the USSR. The Warsaw Pact is a tabou question at this stage. NATO's nature and contents find, within its own ranks, contradictory answers. The three institutions of the EEC are far from speaking the same language. The way in which decisions were taken these days about European political union creates again the danger of a two-speed Europe. The new parity of the DM introduce a very important factor into the European economy. Japan's monetary imbalance in the last weeks throws a shadow in the economically beaming Pacific rim.

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Meanwhile the poor of the world become poorer every day.

Isn't the world ready for a global post cold war agenda, namely for a set of priorities where food, health, shelter and education would be taken as seriously as tanks, weapons, missiles during the cold war? If we are not able to help through our very simple day-to-day work in the collective task of designing a grand strategy of survival for our fellow men and women, what are we doing at this juncture of time?

"AT THE CONTINENTAL LEVEL, AFRICA MUST COMMENCE WITH ITS OWN THINKING AND PERESTROIKA ", said General Obasanjo, former Head of State of Nigeria, at the inaugural session of the meeting convened jointly by the "Africa Leadership Forum" and the OECD, in Paris, 17/18 th April. The meeting focussed on "The impact of change in Eastern Europe on Africa". Gen.Obasanjo stressed that there is "a large number of often economically unviable States". Hence the need for regional integration and his proposal "to convene a Conference on Security and Cooperation in Africa" (CSCA).

"Si nous voulons des preuves avant d'agir nous n'arriverons jamais à l'action. Il y a un caractère irrationnel et violent de toute décision où, si c'est l'intelligence qui propose, c'est la volonté qui dispose: le créateur franchit d'un bond cet abîme vertigineux qui sépare savoir et pouvoir; le héros agit immédiatement par la puissance rayonnante et convertissante de son être, et non point la force convaincante de son verbe."

"THE TOTAL COLLAPSE OF THE SYSTEM"— These are the clear words of Canadian engineer Hortense Michaud-Lalanne to diagnose the situation of the technico-economic-political ideology governing the whole world. In a paper entitled "Energy, Power and Superman" which she submitted to the Parliament of Canada on behalf of the Advisory Committee for Energy Options she makes a breakthrough in the much needed formulation of the basic problem of energy. She acknowledges that:

"Billions of taxpayers' money are being channelled right now, in the name of development, to accelerate the total collapse of the system, reflecting our Superman aspirations to limitless power."

And as the general public is not moved by statistics, she decides to express, by very simple equations, our energy consumption in slave-years! Well, taking North America's annual energy consumption she arrives at the staggering figure of 25 (yes, twenty-five!) billion slave-years! And she explains why she uses that comparison:

"It is to show the parallel between the promoters and the beneficiaries of our throwaway civilization, and yesterday's champions of slavery."

"IN 89 CHINA BURNT 1 BILLION TONS OF COAL!" — This was the sincere answer of Song Jian, one of the 5 members of the State Science and Technology Commission of the Chinese Commission for Science and Technology) when I asked him about the paradox of China's policy, namely to cooperate in the solution of the major environmental problems (among them the CO2 emission) and, at the same time, to make plans to build 200 coal-based power stations. (This happened during the meeting of the Advisory Committee on Science and Technology for Development, held in China, the 1/10th April.) He said that the scientists are very concerned with this problem and that they envisage 3 types of solutions: hydroelectric energy, nuclear energy as a transition and alternative renewable sources of energy. A few months ago in Montreal a professor from Princeton had assured us, at a high-level expert meeting convened by InterAction Council and chaired by Trudeau that in a period between 5 to 10 years photovoltaics will be feasible. But meanwhile... what would you say to the Chinese with 23% of the world population and 7% of its arable land??

"WOMEN ARE INTERESTED IN THE REAL LIFE OF PEOPLE", said Tatiana Zaslavskaya, the political economist who is among the current advisors of Gorbachev.

*"Le courage est une science, la science des choses redoutables.
Le courage est, par rapport aux choses redoutables, une énergie juste, sage et prudente. Pour avoir du courage il est nécessaire d'avoir peur.
C'est la peur reniée, c'est la peur reprimée et supprimée, c'est la peur surmontée, et non point l'absence de peur qui fait le courage: car si la peur inexistante est aphobie ou impavidité, la peur refoulée fonde seule un courage positif."*



Several years ago she decided to live in Siberia and to conduct there, away from the capital, her socio-economic research forming a think-tank with her closest collaborators. In due time, she was invited by Gorbachev to come to Moscow to talk about food problems. She commented recently: "Women are interested in the problems that are near the human conditions, social justice, status of young and old." She is a member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences as well as a member of Parliament.

RESHUFFLING OF THE OFFICIAL CHINA CHURCH STRUCTURES

- When in my official visit to China in 83 I requested an audience with the the Bishop who was the President of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. I felt then that that there was ground for hope. I could see this month in China that there are meaningful steps made in the Catholic community. For the first time the Bishops in China come together into a Bishops' Conference. They are seen as a kind of executive body of the general assembly of Catholic representatives. In a meeting held in Beijing in March 89 the Bishops agreed that the Holy Father must be recognised as the Head of the Church and the Faithful be allowed to pray for him. In this context, the CCPA will coordinate and carry out all contacts between the government and the Church.

"HAPPY IS THE COMMUNITY WHICH HAS BECOME AN ABYSS OF POINTS"

- In his words at Easter Sunday Frere Roger of Taize expressed in a moving way his understanding of interior life: "A true interior life cannot take us away from the human solidarities." Hence in the light of Easter every Christian is challenged to ask him(her)self: "Where are the essential solidarities this year, in this world of ours?" - Indeed - says I - where are they for each one of us??

"TAIZE TOUCHES ME DEEPLY"

- said Cardinal Lustiger of Paris on TV at Easter Saturday. He explained that there are several elements which touch him:

"They are monks, contemplatif people. And yet they are the ones who have the widest action among the youth of Europe and of the world. The youth of Europe, with for many years already the youth of Eastern Europe, has come to Taize as a place of communion, convergence, peace. They are monks who create action!

Taize is a true ecumenical place. There is a great respect, no polemics and yet no confusion whatsoever.

"L'avenir, pour le courage, est vraiment l'aventure "à venir". Le courage aide le devenir à faire advenir l'avenir. Le courage, poussant à la roue, rend le rythme de la durée plus léger, plus tendu, plus nerveux; aussi le courageux a-t-il, comme l'aventurier, un sens aigu de la conjoncture passagère et flagrante; il possède un talent spécial pour capter en voltige le kairos opportun, la fortune du moment qui passe, comme s'il était accordé par son courage à l'occasion irréversible."

They are people who understood a key point of Christianity - the more one is mystical, the more one is practical; the more one is for God the more one is for humankind, serving the others, getting the hands dirty if necessary in order to help those who are in need".

"WHAT TIME IS IT" - This is the title of a new film produced by Ettore Scola. A father, 60 years old, and his 30 years old son, spent a whole day together. Each desires to do whatever will be agreeable to the other. and, yet, every time, there is a dissonance, a failure, two different wavelengths.

There is more in it than the distance between two generations. As the critics say, this simple film "reveals treasures of modesty and lucidity; it awakes in everyone the secret pain of all moments of affection we were not able to cope with". There is also the poignant truth that we are never able "to plot" happiness for another person. A film without action but filled with a continuous attempt to dialogue. And every time grand-father's watch giving pretext to underline the time that goes by, the time lost... the time of all childhood for a glimpse recaptured, but "it is always too late in the watch of tenderness"... And again and again not a question but a statement: "What time is it", "Che hora é"...

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EUROPEAN youth are changing newspapers and magazines as the new context for life and work of new generations. The change that is taking place under our eyes is breathtaking. Any project that emerges in the world of affairs, of the scientific community, of Universities, of tourism, of theatre, is conceived from the start as an European project. The European youth realizes that the future demands of them to know two languages besides their own. The cultural consequences are far from being fully understood. One that fascinates me is the necessary cosmopolitan nature of our cities and the new perspectives they offer to live beyond our own mental boundaries!

THE BILL ON THE RIGHT OF ABODE IN UK has been lately the most discussed question in Hong-Kong and Macao. It raises once again the problem about the nature of laws: can they have a psychological goal besides the regulatory effect they obviously lead to? The questions emerging in Asia in this regard are not very far from the much debated question of immigration in Europe. What are the cultural implications of the new migrations of our time?

"Le courage, comme il brave tous les Ailleurs de l'espace, accélère tous les Ensuite et Plus tard de la durée."

- Vladimir Jankélévitch
in "Les vertus et l'amour"