



*fragments from personal experiences - Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo*

**ECONOMIES IN TRANSITION** is the most discussed question in European political and economic circles. Meeting after meeting is tackling the change from centrally planned economies to the market system and attempting to provide workable answers. Experts from the most prestigious schools are making regular "pilgrimages" to the Central and Eastern European countries. But so far *no concrete solution has been found to encompass the complexity of the problems at stake*. Though with the crumbling down of the Communist regimes everybody spoke about "the end of ideologies", what is happening in reality is a total mythification of the ideology of the market economy. This prevents political action to dedicate itself to a systematic approach to a set of problems that need to be looked at in a technical perspective. For instance, both in the Eastern and in the Western countries privatization appears as the most important question - it is not so. As Poland is already experiencing, privatization leads nowhere if it is not preceded, as Bob MacNamara stressed in an expert meeting in London, by macro stabilization (fiscal balance, control of money supply) and by structural reform (price and trade liberalization). Even then privatization is not something to happen overnight - it should start with small firms in competitive fields while the big enterprises should remain as long as it is needed as a responsibility of the State. At the InterAction Council session early in June we declared:

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"ALTHOUGH PUBLIC DEBATE OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS HAS FOCUSED HEAVILY ON PRIVATIZATION, THE ENDS MUST NOT BE CONFUSED WITH THE MEANS. WHILE INTRODUCTION OF THE MARKET ECONOMY REMAINS A PRIORITY OBJECTIVE, PRIVATIZATION IS BUT ONE OF THE MEANS FOR ITS ATTAINMENT. IT IS LIKELY THAT FOR MANY YEARS TO COME THE ECONOMIES OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE AND OF THE SOVIET UNION WILL BE MIXED ECONOMIES WITH A COMPARATIVELY STRONG PUBLIC SECTOR OPERATING UNDER MARKET PRINCIPLES."

**THE CONCEPT OF PROPERTY** is one of the key-questions that ask for philosophical clarification and socio-economic interpretation. With the desire to wipe out the last 50 years of their history, all the Eastern European countries have embarked in a process of restitution of property to the former owners (or their heirs!) before the Communist regime. In Germany where the process is controlled by the existing legislation on heritage there are at the moment 1,200,000 cases in court!! In Poland meeting the needs of former owners would eat up 1/3 of the national budget! In the other countries there is a total vacuum about who is able to decide what belongs to whom. As some of us have been trying to stress to the political leaders and their advisers in those countries, property is certainly part of basic rights but it should not understood as individual satisfaction only. In the judeo-

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 "El cambio perdurable, fecundo, es aquel que es transformación del ser presuntamente estático en proyecto constantemente perfectible. El sufrimiento que el cambio acarrea se podría expresar del siguiente modo: es la experiencia de riesgo imprevisible."

Christian tradition prevailing on the European continent, property is something of which we must be "faithful stewards". This is why the political theories have built through the centuries mechanisms that show clearly the social value of all personal property (e.g. the laws of heritage, taking some benefit for the whole of society through fiscal norms and leaving only one defined portion for the heir). As this has not been done yet in the Eastern countries, there is paralysis in investment as people are afraid of the previous owners appearing one day on the doorstep and claiming what they consider their own!

**THE ORDINATION OF THREE WOMEN AND TWO MEN** in the Lutheran Church of Sweden was a first in my Church experience. The Cathedral of Uppsala is beautiful and imposing. Long before the Sunday celebration the people started coming, all very composed and in very sober dark dresses. Here and there a woman in regional costume. The Liturgy very sober, very hieratic, with only a moment of another rythm when a special choir sung a thanksgiving song from somewhere in the tropics... The ordained pastors all serene and radiant. Everything full of restraint, of unspoken realities, a sense of mystery surrounding the event and the people involved. How much I thought of the art of Ingmar Bergman who through his movies had prepared me to see and to understand such a culture! I asked one woman why she had chosen this path. She said: "It cannot be explained - it was God's call. I had to follow it."

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**SOCIAL INEQUALITIES AS A BASIS OF EXCLUSION** was the topic I had to address myself to at the Catholic Social Week in Lisbon. It gathered more than a thousand people coming from all the dioceses in the country. Though there had been an effort to involve parishes and all the lay movements, all the carismatic groups were absent. I had the vivid impression that all those present were the remnants of the disappearing species, "the socially committed Christian". Looking back at the different stages of lay groups during my lifetime I have the odd impression that a new beginning is needed about what it means for Christians "to be in the world but not of the world". Not to start the same thing but to start anew - to see in a new light "the world" and the call to be in it and to work through and with its own materials. A spirituality which may encompass the world and its realities, which may discover the path to surrender and to wisdom in the midst of all the contradictions out of which history is made... isn't it the sense of mystery and salvation that is at stake there?

**EVERY LANGUAGE CARRIES A TRADITION OF KNOWLEDGE**, said the totally bi-lingual director of the African Bank during the Board meeting of the World Institute of Economic Development Research, in Helsinki. And he went on explaining that, in our time, no scientific field can attempt

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*"Lo que caracteriza la vivencia normal de cambio es que este re-conocimiento de los propios límites involucra al mismo tiempo la conciencia y jerarquización de las potencialidades singulares de cada individuo y también los alcances y límites de la condición humana."*



to reach its goals of being international if it remains only within the scope and universe of one language. Isn't it also true for any international endeavour, whatever its realm? Isn't it necessary to make the experience how another mind shapes its thought and expresses it in words in order to start grasping what is asked of us in a true international spirit? But isn't it also a delight to plunge into another universe of sounds and meanings and to stretch one's own capacity to encompass it all?

**"THERE IS A HARD CORE OF PERVERSION IN EVERY DESIRE"** - When I said this I felt the whole audience suddenly very alert. It was during a round table in Porto, as part of a large series on "The sight - from the photon to seduction". My task was to speak about "the perversions of the sight in the realm of power"! The house (of a new cultural Foundation) was overcrowded, with hundreds of people following the debate through internal TV! Questions like: what does the person in power see? How is he (she) seen? What kind of mediations are there to distort, create images? And at the core of it all: when each person looks at power positions what does she want to see, or rather what is her desire, what is she looking for - the "faces" of others or her own image?

**THE "ASSISES" OF THE EUROPEAN CONFEDERATION** have taken place in Prague, under the initiative of Presidents Mitterrand and Havel. The idea, in a nutshell, is to provide a forum at the European level where all countries of the continent are together at the same level. There are already several European institutions that contribute to the architecture of the continent, said some of the 150 Europeans from all countries who had been invited. Others argued (and have shown it practically in different working commissions) that there are several fields where the interests are common but where there is no forum to discuss and plan things together. Such fields are, for instance, the energy and all its networks, the transport systems (as things are now EEC is planning its own network of roads and railways and the other European countries are bound to accept the terminals as they will be shaped by the 12...); the circulation of persons and internal migrations; cultural identities and initiatives for better understanding; environment. Among many practical suggestions in all these fields, it was decided to keep the idea alive and to try in a very smooth way to give shape to some of the suggestions that emerged in Prague.

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**"DON'T YOU KNOW? WE ARE POST-MATERIALISTS!"** - She was saying it to me, in her radiant face and a twinkle in her eyes, answering my visible astonishment before the fact that she never uses a car but rather goes by bicycle or by bus. I shared her life for a few days - a tremendous simplicity, something I would have taken as an almost ascetic overtone if I didn't see the spontaneity and at the same time the rationale behind it. Having seen the greed in places where

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*"Para cambiar se hace necesario un margen de tolerancia al riesgo y a la imprevisibilidad, poder tolerar un presente de perfiles no definidos, aprender a apoyarse en la confianza de llegar a conocer lo nuevo y en un sentimiento de no extravío en lo que la propia experiencia tiene de imponderable."*

there is little, the narcissism in other places where life is just beginning to be easier, I ask myself the fundamental political question which keeps coming in all the international gatherings in which I participate: "Is it possible to conceive a leapfrogging in the process of development?" Is it possible to get a short-cut and to arrive there where those who have had access to everything just give it up for the sake of their own self-respect, of solidarity with others, of - indeed! - truly POST-MATERIALISM?

**"DON'T YOU CONSIDER LIFE AS THE SUPREME VALUE?"** - This is the question currently asked to Christians in international meetings. Why? Just read the figures in the Final Statement of InterAction Council:

"TODAY, WE LIVE IN A WORLD OF 5.3 PEOPLE. IN 1950 - A MERE 40 YEARS AGO - WORLD POPULATION WAS LESS THAN HALF. IF PRESENT TREND CONTINUES THE WORLD OF 2025 WILL BE TWICE THAT NUMBER. MOST OF THIS GROWTH WILL OCCUR IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD, WHERE DURING THE 80'S IT ALREADY CAUSED A DROP IN PER CAPITA GNP.

THE PRESENT POPULATION OF THE PLANET IS CONSUMING, DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, 40% OF ENERGY FIXED ON LAND AS FOOD; IF THE OCEANS ARE INCLUDED, IT IS CONSUMING MORE THAN 50%. THIS USE OF ENERGY CANNOT BE DOUBLED, NO MATTER HOW MUCH THE POPULATION EXPANDS. THIS CLEARLY DEMONSTRATES THAT CURRENTLY THE WORLD IS ON A PATH OF UNSUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

NOTWITHSTANDING THE FRIGHTENING FIGURES FOR A POPULATION GROWTH WELL UNDERWAY AND A VISIBLY DETERIORATING ENVIRONMENT, IT IS NOT ONLY A MORAL QUESTION, BUT EQUALLY OF ENLIGHTENED POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INTEREST. IT CALLS FOR THE LEADERS OF THE NATIONS AND THEIR LEADERS TO STRIVE FOR A RESOLUTION OF THESE ISSUES, BOTH AT NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS."

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**THE FEAST OF MUSIC** was the sign under which French people celebrated the beginning of Summer on this hemisphere. At the most unexpected places, in the big boulevards as well as in the small streets of Paris people were playing or singing. Here a chamber quartet was playing Brahms with the people around as silent as in a concert hall; a few meters at the next corner there was the rock paraphernalia and the sound spread all over the place. But the people listening to Brahms were quiet and undisturbed. Then there was a solitary player of saxophone, to be followed a bit further by a group of young people playing popular tunes on acordeon. At the corner of Odeon part of the choir of the students from the Schools of engineers were very intently singing Haendel... And on and on, people went singing late in the night. Near some Churches the very choir of the Church was singing. At dawn the Seine was full of sounds of music softly played. The people went on, from group to group, listening, applauding, smiling. There was complicity in the air and an attitude of expectancy... For what? For another type of urban life and quality of being together as a multitude??

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*"La re-conciliación de uno consigo mismo es quizás la vivencia más medular de la mitad de la vida, ya que se trata de la aceptación de uno como proyecto y al mismo tiempo la aceptación de ese proyecto como algo de alcance restringido."*

- Lilliana Mizrahi  
in "La mujer transgresora"