

a scope broader than our own words

For more than five weeks now, I have been involved, both in Portugal (in a meeting with our delegates at UN-N.Y.) and in Paris (as observer at the Executive Board of Unesco), with the question of the New International Order. As you have seen in the newspapers this is the big question at stake at UNCTAD IV in Nairobi as well as in many bi-lateral and regional encounters.

I have heard experts from all continents, I have exchanged opinions, frustrations and hopes with some who are deeply committed to the bringing about of a new world. Utopia? Idealism? Going with the winds? Manipulation by the economic dimension? - Maybe all that together and still more. For me, personally, all this is so deeply connected with my own experience in the Grail in the last 15 years that I wished I could discuss everything with those who are or have been committed to what we used to call "development work", "social change", "cultural action", "Christ centeredness"... I cannot help but seeing this last period of the Grail life as one sign of the deep unrest already at work in the world at large as well as of the intuitive grasp of the roads to be taken, of the perspectives to be open, of the dimensions to be explored...

This is why I thought that in this time of the year - when we are trying to prepare ourselves for the Spirit who comes to renew the earth - I could share with you some of my reflections about the way the international organizations have come to the formulation of this new international order as well as transcribe for you some very pointed quotations from the Unesco current documents.



As you know, in the late fifties the word "development" invaded the international scene. So much so that the sixties were declared by the UN system the I Decade of Development, which two clear quantitative goals: a growth of 5% in the GNP of the poor countries, a development-aid of 1% GNP from the rich countries. When in 71 I had the opportunity to comment in the GA of the UN the voluminous 4-year report on the "world social situation" two things were obvious and clear to me. One was the almost unanimous analysis of a "non-development decade" - the rich countries had become richer and the poor countries poorer. The other was the growing anger of the poor countries (the so-called "77" which are now more than 100) making what appeared to me at that time as a "proletarian revolution" not based on class-struggle but on "countries-struggle".

However, the UN system, in spite of the evidence, couldn't accept to change the concepts with which it had operated. Therefore, the Strategy for the II Development Decade contained the ingredients for its own failure. Entirely based on quantitative targets and on the myth of the universality of the technologies and economies of the rich countries, to be repeated or "adapted" by the poor countries, it contained no indication of a qualitative change.

This was such a contradiction with reality that it was doomed to explode. And so it did with the "energy crisis". Since then the escalation of the poor countries has been growing in words and gestures until it reached the peaceful convening, at the request of Algeria, of the extraordinary GA of UN which adopted the "Declaration of a New International Economic Order". Since then all the international organizations have been reflecting upon it and are making of it a great challenge.

What about the rich countries? To read newspapers, magazines and books of the Northern hemisphere is, for me, to be confronted with a claim as powerful and poignant as the one coming from the poor countries. In fact, the rich societies, based through their sociological mechanisms and psychological models, on the "law of economic growth", nourished in themselves alienation, rebellion and counter-culture. The students revolt between 67 and 70 everywhere,



the movements for self-determination of women in all the rich countries, the ecological movement and its plea for survival of man and his environment, are just clear elements of the inner contradiction of the rich societies already in the process of blowing up.

What fascinates me is the converging trend of these two elements: in fact the new power in the hands of the "immense majority" of human beings merges with the aspirations of the powerless in the rich societies. They both want more justice, equality of opportunities, freedom to say yes or no as well as freedom to eat and to be sheltered. When they merge, these two overwhelming world-wide events point out to one single contradiction: if the world wants to survive, to be a place when mankind can shape history, it must "kill" itself in its present forms. Of course, this means a total subversion of the political, economical and technological models developed in the rich countries as well as of the imported and sought for models of the poor countries.

In the search for a new international order, the ever-present conflict East/West is replaced by the dialectics North/South. In a way, it can be said that the whole problematic involved here goes beyond capitalism versus socialism within a given society, because it points out to the failure of both systems, when dominated by economic growth, blind technological achievement and greed for power.

If the new international order is to be more than a "voeu pieux", as it was said in the meeting here, a tremendous renewal of ethics has to be found. Where to find the strength to be faced and to face the radical changes asked of all, poor and rich? Where to find enough conviction to act and to be consistent if not in a strong moral imperative, operative at all levels - the person, the group, the nation, the manifolded expressions of the international community?



"For contemporary thought the world forms a whole, a unity of interrelated parts; a global approach to world problems is manifestly the only approach which comes to terms with their real nature"

"Development is an all-embracing concept, applying to all societies, those which from the economic point of view are most advanced as well as those which, in this respect, are the most deprived."

"The process of development is necessarily multidimensional. It involves not only a community's economic potential and activity, but also its social cohesion and cultural values. Taken in the broadest sense of the term, development should be the concrete expression in social practice, through word or action, of a particular interpretation of the universe and man's situation in it."

"The problem is to replace a system submitted to as the inevitable outcome of incontrollable forces by an axiologically guided system reflecting the broadest possible measure of agreement on the aims the human community should pursue."

"Growth refers back to something other than itself, for its significance cannot be found merely in its own logic, a logic which would be totally self-contained and would be no more than its own self-justification."

"The real problem is to know in what direction growth points, what are its final aims, how is man to find self-fulfilment through this process. This is the question that confronts all societies, whether developed or developing, when they seek to discover new types of growth or when they contrast imported models with the demands of their own structures and socio-cultural values, the factors that alone make true endogenous development possible."

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"When and only when growth is directed towards the ends which individuals and groups fix for themselves, can it become development in the full sense of the term, that is, the full flowering of everything which exists in man in a latent state, the realization of his creativity in all its many forms and aspects."

"Often consumption, which is an essential element in sustaining economic growth, finds itself diverted to the satisfaction of needs which are not essential; more precisely, it is products and material objects which ultimately arouse needs whereas, logically, it should be needs which determine economic choices. This is doubtless the source of the alienation which many people feel when faced the mechanisms of the consumer societies."

"Neither economic growth nor the development of science and technology should be achieved at the cost of sacrificing a people's cultural identity. A future world civilization would be devoid of meaning if it were to be based on standardization and banality and not on a wealth of original cultural features."

"The concept of a new international order is something more than a certain way of organizing the relations between States, something more than a set of legal rules based on the recognition of rights and duties; it is the acceptance of a certain system of values, the values of justice, equality, liberty and solidarity, and the will to give them real effect. These values "will be based on a new awareness in two respects, viz: recognition of the unity of mankind, with all its diverse peoples, races and cultures; and the assertion of a desire to live together, actually experienced not simply as a necessity for survival coexistence but as the deliberate choice of fashioning a common destiny together, with joint responsibility for the future of the human race."

N.B. quotation from

"Moving towards change - reflections on the new international economic order" and "Draft medium-term Plan (1977-1982)"
UNESCO, March 1976.

Pentecost is at hand. We will celebrate the gift of the Spirit and His full presence in the midst of men.

It is a time for every person to hear, in her language, the wonders of God.

It is a time for every person to become aware of her "status of freedom", because she is born in the Spirit.

It is a time to rediscover one's own unique gift and to commit oneself to enter with it in the fabrics of human solidarity.

It is the time to hear that the Spirit of God is filling the whole earth and that to the most obscure part of ourselves a full joy is offered.

And I ask myself... Isn't there a link, somehow, somewhere, by crooked lines, maybe, between the announcement to men of the wonders of God and the conviction and struggle for a world in which such wonders could be made more tangible?

Isn't there an appeal to an ever freer and less conformist attitude in life so that the gifts of the Spirit may reveal themselves in each one of us and make us part and parcel of the new identity all societies are groping for?

Isn't there a covenant between the Spirit and each one of us by which we are committed in spite of ourselves, failures, mistakes, and deceptions, to weave with others the new society?

Isn't there in all these changes, in this continuous shaking of the world, in this provisional condition, the overwhelming newness of the Spirit who tells us to start again and again and again until the joy of all men will be full?

If we are aware of the global and world-wide challenge brought to each one of us by the facts of history laid down unmistakably before us, shouldn't we (we, part of this world-wide Grail, always in search, always with a scope broader than our own words and hearts...) shouldn't we, this year with all strength, say:

"I believe in the Holy Spirit, the giver of life"

P.S. Monique Widmer is in Paris studying since February and we are happy for being a reflection-team together!

Best wishes for Pentecost

Monique

