

Introduction: Structural questions in a planetary context

Perplexity arises from the observation of the Portuguese democracy, its institutions, its achievements, its failures. Hence the questions concerning the reasons for the present state of affairs. Hence the wish to anticipate whatever avenues the year of presidential elections may open.

I hope that, while starting with the questions, some of those avenues may already appear even though in a glimpse...

My own experience in Government as well as everything I have learned in the exchange with eminent leaders and thinkers from your countries leads me to single out three main aspects:

- the conditions for stability in democratic life;
- the relationship between democracy and development;
- the interaction between internal democracy and inter-dependence among countries.

Some may think that I am evading the current issues. I am not. I am very much aware of the role played by individual attitudes as well as by the conglomeration of significant factors. But it would be too simple to reduce the present situation in my country to a mere cause/effect reasoning. There is more at stake than that. It is my deep conviction that we are facing in this country, in a very sharp way, a structural problem



going far beyond our own boundaries.

I consider the situation as a structural problem because the same difficulties and shortcomings seem to be recurring facts in the political life in this country. Regardless of the personalities involved, regardless of the apparent difference in ideologies or programs, a weakness of achievement, as an expression of lack of political will and determination, characterize most of the democratic institutions in their day-to-day performance.

My assumption is that the questions raised by the Portuguese situation are part of a planetary crisis. In some instances, natural disasters or obvious political mis-management, leading to situations of crying needs, prevent the formulation of these questions in all their dimensions. In other instances, where the consumption society of the '60s is still alive, the wealth of most people acts as a smoke screen for the questions which are already there.

However, these questions are surfacing more and more in each country and in the international arena. With different degrees of intensity and even poignancy, we find them in the Northern as well as in the Southern hemisphere. They are reflected in the many essays written all over the world. They show themselves in the slow establishment of democracy in some parts of the world. They come out clearly from our generalized incapacity to deal with the disorder which is conducting the world in the monetary and commercial fields.



I. Democratic stability

After several years of too frequent changes in government, it would be logical to expect from two strong coalitions, with a great and stable majority in the Parliament, a climate of democratic stability. It was not so.

Both coalitions have undergone strange processes of convulsions and confrontations among the partners, without any influence from outside forces. The "entropic State" so well described by Hazel Henderson, is there in a sharp profile: "transaction costs that are generated equal or exceed the society's productive capabilities". The "party-transactions" prevent the coalitions in the Government to run steadily and consistently the affairs of the State.

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Hence, the instability permeating all democratic institutions, paralyzing initiative and investment and creating in most sectors of the public service a climate of inability to take decisions. The consequences among the population are shown, most of all, in feelings of uncertainty, anxiety about the future.

We have used in Portugal the traditional split between "majority" and "opposition". But the majorities have imposed the party-line throughout all State-controlled institutions. We have, thus, fallen back into a pattern too well known to the Portuguese: the partition between those who belong to "the situation" and those who are in the "opposition" not to ideas or programs but



to the hegemony of a group. "The situation" can become a very powerful "conservative" force: it tends to perpetuate in power the same groups; it limits the exercise of democratic freedom because of the psychological pressure put on all spheres of society; it prevents those who "don't belong" to participate actively in the tasks so badly needed for the progress of the nation.

One of the reasons behind these facts is the discrepancy between programs and practice. There are no more clear and sure points of reference in the political scene.

Alternating patterns of governmental changes don't necessarily mean alternatives in political choices. Rather, it means so far change in political personnel.

This explains the need felt for a "chess-board" of the party. I venture that this is the main reason behind the appearance of a new party in the Portuguese political scene as well as the explanation for the hope so many Portuguese people put, according to the polls, in such a party.

It is clear for me that such a new force can contribute to true democratic stability in so far as it presents a modern alternative, capable of mobilizing the best resources we have in all fields and of creating a climate of generalized commitment to the common good.



II. Democracy and development

The Portuguese example is a very good case for the international consensus which is taking shape about the goals and purposes of democracy. It is becoming clearer and clearer that democracy cannot remain for a long time the only goal. Democracy must indicate and work towards societal goals.

Development as I understand it - integrated development geared to the satisfaction of the basic needs of the individual man in all his dimensions and encompassing the whole of society in its evolution for a better way of living - such a development asks for sound democratic structures and values.

Reciprocally, a full democracy - able to integrate the pursuit of civil and political rights as well as of economic, social and cultural rights - must encompass continuously the ever-new goals of development.

The omission of such goals is visible, in the Portuguese situation, in the absence of an adequate and flexible plan of development. That omission is greatly responsible for the tragic social and economic situation of my country.

Some patent examples can be seen without too much scrutiny:

- the unjust social distribution of the costs for maintaining the external financial balance;
- the overload on investment and all economic activity, leading to the discouragement of employers and to excessive



sacrifice of workers;

- the decrease of real wages and the increase of the cost of living, as well as the un-heard of situation of overdue wages;
- the permanence of indicators which show that the above mentioned situations will be worsening - the differential between programmed and achieved levels of budget control and the continuous growth of public expenses.

These facts show clearly enough that another outlook is needed. In order to face the features of our time and to fulfil the Constitutional norms, the Portuguese regime must work out another relationship between democracy and development. The rationality behind the democratic institutions must adjust itself to the requirements made by the process of development. (For instance, the national budget must be presented to the Parliament in due time!)

The democratic regime in Portugal will suffer serious damage if it is only seen from the point of view of the institutional powers. The guide-lines of the regime, as they spring forth from the Constitution, are the consolidation of the democracy and the sustained effort in the process of development. Each one of these two guide-lines is a basic condition for the pursuit of the other.

Hence, we can say that the democratic institutions are functioning normally in so far as the two main goals are equally present. In the framework of the Portuguese Constitution they are inseparable.



The axis of the regime is not, in this perspective, its balance of institutional powers, leading to the categories of "presidentialism", "parliamentarism", "semi-presidentialism". It is, rather, the place given to the goals and structures of development in the working out of the democratic life.

The institutions don't exist for their own sake but for the service of the goals the democracy gives to itself. The submission of democracy and of the achievement of its goals to the mere physical survival of the institutions would be the perversion of the regime itself.

A practical conclusion can be drawn here. It is not enough to defend the "formal" democracy in the hope that later there will be a moment when development can be taken care of. No. Democracy itself will become a shallow reality if it doesn't answer to the concrete fabrics of society and to the individual and collective needs, on the economic, social and cultural levels.

A programmatic alternative is urgently needed for the survival of democracy. However, global and all-embracing solutions don't seem adequate anymore. Sectorial and regional differences demand diversified solutions. On one level, though, a global perspective is needed: the absolute priority to the human resources development. Thus, it is possible to guarantee to all citizens the necessary conditions for the launching of their initiatives and to provide a healthy interaction of skills, activities and interests.



III. Internal democracy and external inter-dependence

It is unquestionable for me that the enrichment of the democratic life in a country goes together with that country's ability to establish friendly and operational ties with other countries.

One of the main tasks of the countries which are peer in natural resources or are in an intermediary stage of development is to safeguard their own autonomy, by building up aid schemes based on inter-dependence with different countries rather than easily create an exclusive dependence from one country.

In this context, the path for Portugal ought to be clear.

By its geographical location and its cultural roots, Portugal is an European country. But this Europe to which Portugal belongs is also seeking for its own place in today's world. Having contributed to shape Europe and to establish its role in the past, Portugal cannot evade its responsibilities in the search going on in Europe. We can say that Portugal is already sharing in that task through the circulation of ideas and culture, and through the presence of so many Portuguese workers in other European countries. But that task takes also place in institutions who, in different ways, are shaping Europe: the Council of Europe, the EEC, the CSCE.

By its history over the last 5 centuries Portugal has been in interaction with many different people in all continents.



It would be absurd, contrary to our national interests as well as a violation of international solidarity to minimize the importance of our relationship with the countries who speak and work with our own language.

But shouldn't we speak also of other areas in the world?

The Mediterranean area, the Ibero-american region, the countries whose first steps in modern history are reported in the books of the Portuguese historians of that period, the countries where the collective memory keeps alive the fact that the Portuguese were the first European faces they saw... Too much ^{of a} dream? I don't think so, as I could describe for each of these "connections" initiatives in which I have been or am still involved in the last years.

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Moreover, the Portuguese Constitution is very clear in spelling the principle "of cooperation with all other people towards the emancipation and the progress of mankind".



Conclusion: a challenge to the political wisdom

The situation in Portugal is difficult, complex, and even for those who are in the hub of events, unforeseeable. But it is exactly because of all these features that it is a fascinating situation: a challenge for the insight of the individuals as well as of its people as a whole.

How to answer to that challenge? First of all by facing the problems as they are, without burying the facts they show in the too well known process of finding scape-goats. Secondly, by trying to understand the new forces and processes at work in the world and to place them in the political framework. Finally, by working with new paradigms which will enable us to face new questions and to pave the way for new solutions.

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But there is also something else. Something which was expressed in the last session of the InterAction Council of Former Heads of Government by Dr. Kurt Fürgler, who is since the 1st of this month the President of the Helvetic Confederation:

"Voir les choses comme elles sont, dans leurs dimensions exactes et dans les rapports qu'elles ont entre elles; prévoir les conséquences des gestes que l'on fait et des actes que l'on pose; posséder une imagination créatrice, être capable d'innover et de créer: telle est l'intelligence politique."

