



## WORLD FLASHES

NOVEMBER 90

*fragmented notes from personal experiences - Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo*

### "STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT IS ONE SUBJECT WHICH IS AT THE HEART OF OECD..."

- We knew already that the members of the International Monetary fund were "very concerned" with the so-called "structural adjustment" of the countries who borrowed money! We knew the disasters caused by short-term and technocratic views of such adjustments. But what is new at the end of the 80's and beginning of the 90's is the proposition - in the context of OECD! - of the "structural adjustment" as a substitute concept for all-encompassing *social change*! It is clearly said: it refers itself to the "set of transformations which allow the balanced functioning of the economy". At a time when ideologies are dying out - as many seem to believe - there it comes, the economy, to fill in the empty space! Some 15-20 years ago those of us who were committed to "social change" were doing our best to put into practice our deep conviction: "economy at the service of men and not men sacrificed to the economy". This had many consequences from the micro to the macro-level. For instance, all my political action was based on such premise. The change we are witnessing now needs to be counter-acted by a more social-oriented concept and practice of economy management. A new level of awareness from everyone is necessary if we are to challenge the new pervasive ideology.

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

"SELF-SERVICE ECONOMY" is the expression currently used to encapsulate the current move of deregulation of the labour market. It is meant to allow for a 'free' (???) functioning of the market. It means, among other things, that structures of "protection" of individuals at the level of the State will tend to diminish drastically. Even countries like Sweden - whose reputation of social-mindedness is legendary - are consciously moving towards a disengagement of the State. Politicians of all colours, businessmen, scientists, all told me the same. The exceptions are to be found among Christian young people who search for a new justice. If we think that the countries with a clear social policy are a small dozen... we wonder what can be the shape of a new solidarity that will be expressed by other structures outside the State. Are we ready to start immediately those forms of solidarity in the different communities of which we are a part? Who will fight against the capitalism of the ego?

### FLEXIBILITY IS THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DEREGULATION OF THE LABOUR MARKET,

brought about by the liberal ideology embodied in the "market economy". The OECD is studying the implications of the new situation for women. From one side, norms become less imperative. Within the enterprise women are the first to suffer the consequences. This leads to the demand for remunerated activities and less and less commitment to voluntary work, acknowledged at the same time as an essential aspect of the new type of economy. Individuals search for the piling up of diplomas and neglect the knowledge coming from



experience. A logic of profit conducts all behaviours. But from another side, flexibility can be a chance to invent new forms of work, of combination of different types of activity, of interaction of different circles of relationship... One condition is needed, that women will strengthen each other in the discovery of these new modes. Flexibility, if intelligently managed, can change life from a run to a danse...

"CHRONICLE OF THE TIMES" is the title of a fascinating book by Maria Isabel Barreno, one of the famous "Three Marias" from the women's movement. Through the members of a family she gives the atmosphere in which three successive generations saw their lives intermingled with the political and social events in Portugal and beyond. What she writes evokes moments and scenes of one's own life, but most of all she depicts without mercy the weaknesses of our beings as women. Like when she speaks of an older woman: "She is a personality so scattered that only when she is told in episodes and circumstances is she revealed."

"WOMEN ARE LITTERALLY IN A NO MAN'S LAND" ... said a Brazilian participant of a planning meeting on "Women as social actors in managing global change". She was referring to the fact that women's culture is hidden by the male dominant values. But other participants argued: what is women's culture? I realized later in the discussion that their concern was a rejection against the idea of women's specificity had to do with the parallel they find in the rejection of universal discourse by the fundamentalist groups. These groups claim the "particular" in order to reject the "universal" - could the same risk threaten all attempts to deal with women's culture? Would women be relegated to a marginal land unable then to be part of a universal culture on their own right?

"THE YARDSTICKS OF EQUALITY" is the way a Finnish participant at the same meeting qualifies the fact that in the past the status of man has been the primary measurement of the status of women. She says: "During the years we have begun to realize, however, that the traditional approach in the equality struggle has created new problems for women almost at the same pace as it has solved the existing ones".

In one of her articles she explains what she means: "For decades we women have tried to prove that we are *as good as men* in everything where men are good, in intelligence, efficiency, skills, strength and performance. That is how we have tried to justify our right to equality. This pattern of equality measurement leads, however, towards increasing similarity between men and women. It implies that women have to become more and more like men in order to be equal. But do we want to become men? Do we want equality on these terms? - This kind of equality doesn't do justice to women."





**TO READ AND TO INTERPRET FIGURES WITH CREATIVITY** is a task entrusted to all who do some kind of research on the situation and culture of women. This was particularly clear for me in Sweden. Let us see some figures: in 85/86, 60% of all first-year students at Swedish universities were women; slightly more than 82% of all women (as 90% of all men) are gainfully employed; in the Parliament 38% of all members are women, in the municipalities over 30% of the councillors are women and in the county councils they are 42%. But Sweden is one of the countries with the highest professional segregation by sex: the sexes are evenly balanced in only 14 of the more than 200 occupational fields specified, women predominate (constitute more than 60%) in 56 occupations while men predominate in 161 occupations. - What to think about these facts?? That Swedish women have still "progress" to make?? Or are there other elements (more qualitative) that are "speaking" through these discrepancies and telling us something else? If so, what?

**THE MAGIC OF THE RUSSIAN BALLETS**, reconstituted by the Joffrey Ballet and presented in the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, have enthralled me! As there are no movies from the Nijinski period it was from photos, costumes, notes of direction, that it has been possible to give life to the Russian ballets of the beginning of the XX century. "L'après-midi d'un faune" is a masterpiece of studied movement - the groups of women reproduce the paintings of the old Greek vases in an astounding way. "Le sacre du printemps" is the central production of the evening program. I knew of the dynamism of the coreograph Diaghilev stimulating Stravinsky and Prokoviev to create the music that would lead him to new coreographic forms. But what was for me totally new was the Picasso/Cocteau play of "Parade" where the different elements of a circus come into the scene to do their show disguised in cubist drawings... And did you know that Nijinski had a sister, Bronislava Nijinska, who has created a superb coreography of "les nocces" from Stravinski? I wished I could describe it... - the wedding ceremony so much like Sigrid Undset's Cristina Lavransdatter, the distinctive coreography portraying the attitudes of the men and of the women, the movements of women, groups of ten blending into one, so incredibly similar to the paintings that at the same time Gustav Klimt was creating in Vienna...

**AN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES IN JAPAN** is something that stretches out your imagination! Its design was the exercise to which several Rectors of Japanese Universities and a few Europeans were invited to devote their exchange during two days. An obvious attitude is to capture from the Japanese experience in science and technology whatever may be helpful for the overall development process in this planet. At the same time if the Institute is going to deal with advanced studies it has to break new ground. The question then arises: are these two positions



incompatible? They are not if we are firmly convinced that from a true development to take place in the whole Southern hemisphere a leapfrogging in social, economic and political sciences is indispensable.

**"OUR FUTURE WILL BE UNDENIABLY URBAN"** is the certainty we acquire listening to the 25 scientists who discuss in Tokyo, at the United Nations University, "The Mega-city and the Future: Population Growth and Policy Responses". The figures are astounding. While in 1950 only London and New York had 8 million or more persons, now, in 1990 there are 20 cities who have reached that size and in the year 2000 they will be 28, of which 22 in the Southern Hemisphere and 6 in the North. By then 60% of the world population will live in or around cities. Housing, transportation, environment degradation and unemployment are the main macro-social issues. In the South the picture will be bleaker: poverty of the majority, very little technology, social alienation. Moreover mega-cities are "layered" cities, where many different processes co-exist. But they can also be the focus of economic life of a region, a country. The relation between the size of the mega-city and the total population of a country makes a great difference: though they are all mega-cities, Beijing represents 1% of China's population, Tokyo 10% of Japan's and Seoul 40% of South Korea! Most striking fact in all continents: mega-cities are shaping the future.

## Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

**"WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT THE WAR IN THE GULF?"** - In spite of the generalized craziness about "going to war", in spite of the terrible damage done by the media functioning as continuous loud-speakers for all the war-obsessed politicians, there are some people who are raising that question. They won't be on time to prevent this war. But they want all international cooperation possible to put together a new and peace-oriented "Manhattan project" to produce energy technologies capable of making diversified sources of energy (nuclear fusion, photovoltaics, geothermics) a competitive reality much sooner than the recent world climate conference predicted. Such will be the price and the conditions of what should already be called "A NEW ENERGY ERA".

---

*"Dix ans nous séparent de l'an deux mille. Un jour, on parlera de cette décennie comme de celle où s'est joué le nouveau millénaire. C'est de l'action des hommes pendant ces années-là que dépendent nos chances de ne pas gâcher tant d'espérances.*

*Encore faudrait-il - c'est possible! - donner un sens heureux, jubilatoire, à ces prochaines années deux mille. D'où la nécessité d'un cadre de pensée pour mettre en ordre ce qui bouillonne, éclairer les problèmes, proposer des solutions. Il faut changer de lignes d'horizon, s'inscrire dans de tout autres perspectives et concevoir un projet donnant sens au temps, conciliant MODERNITE et SPIRITUALITE, enrichissant la liberté de chacun de celle de l'espèce entière."*

- in "Lignes d'horizon",  
Jacques Attali.