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PART I

INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT TOWARDS DEMOCRACY

1.1 We are facing a totally new political phenomenon; in all continents there is a movement towards democratization.

This springs forth from the desire for freedom which galvanizes people. It is a time of euphoria and hope. People equate freedom with a better life, with new prospects for society, with peace.

It is therefore, a movement from the bottom up. It has been understood by most political leaders, thus creating a wave without precedent of what can be seen as giving up power. At this stage it does represent a unique chance for popular mobilization and for the creation of new forms of democracy.

At the same time all countries are subjected to a continuous pressure to introduce democratic regimes.

Such pressure is visible in the on-going process of political conditionality. It was established for the first time in November 1989 towards the countries of central and Eastern Europe, and included in the charter of the Bank for the reconstruction of Eastern Europe.

Since then it spread to many other countries, up to the clear conditions put recently by Baker to China.



From this angle, it is a strong condition imposed by the world and its most powerful countries - it goes from the top down.

These two trends do meet - fortunately - and create, for the first time in history, a dynamism that provides reason for great hopes for the future.

The unique feature of such dynamism resides in the fact that democracy is not to be taught to the countries who are entering that path. Because, at this stage in history, democracy is under strong scrutiny in the traditional democratic countries. New forms need to be invented.

I am convinced that:

- the Northern Hem. can learn a lot from the questions raised in the countries that are establishing democracy.
- I am as well convinced that the Southern Hem. can make a leap-frogging in regard to forms of democracy, by taking into account both the experience in the North and its own culture.

Therefore, what I have chosen to say has this twofold movement and hope in the background.

1.2. At the outset, let me recall the basic ingredients of democracy as it appears in its best forms.

- it is based on the principle of fundamental equality of all individuals before the law and the state. Therefore, it repels all forms of discrimination or exclusion. Either by legislative acts or by tradition, it embodies a set of norms and rules to be followed by all individuals and institutions,

and establishes a clear distinction among the basic institutional political and judiciary powers. Therefore, it requires as a condition a state of law;

- it is expected to express, throughout its structure, institutions and processes of decision - making, that sovereignty resides with the people. It thus creates an inseparable connection between sovereignty, citizenship and democracy. Therefore, importance of universal suffrage and free elections;
- it accepts and encourages the status of freedom and dignity of the human person, doing away with all threats to basic human rights. Therefore, inviolability of human person, freedom of expression and freedom of association;
- it comes into being through a constitution as fundamental law out of which electoral laws are drawn; electoral laws are changeable mechanisms intended to provide the conditions for the expression of popular will in all its shades;
- it implies a balance of institution and centers of power in such a way as to provide democratic control of all institutions and the support for the exercise of the basic principle of accountability of those elected to their constituency or to the nation;
- it welcomes and stimulates the dynamism of society in all its forms: press, organizations, popular mobilization;
- it is rooted in the culture of the people. Therefore, it takes into account the way in which the fabrics of society



constitutes itself and how the issue of power is perceived by such a culture. It is for me a fundamental question to try to see what in each of our own culture can be captured by the democratic movement and translated into new perspectives and new institutions.

1.3. Democracy at the national level is part and parcel of the broader question of world governance.

Multilateral organizations have developed in the last decades, but they still represent a conventional way of dealing with separated ~~users~~ of events and issues.

However, in the last years a new awareness has grown not only among scholars, but also among politicians and the people in general, concerning the interdependence of issues and countries. "Foreign relations" were traditionally a field apart from internal policies. Today there are no public policies in any country that may be designed with accuracy outside the frame of international relations.

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The attempt to re-examine the UN functioning came from the acknowledgement that there could and should ~~be~~ new forms of real democratic decision-making.

However, we are now uncritical with the way the G7 has replaced all international bodies (rich and powerful)! Obviously, the G7 works now because Japan and Germany are not permanent members of the security council!

The search for a democratic and rational way of dealing with issues at world level can only take place if it is accepted that



our time is a time of complexity and that forecasting is an almost impossible task.

The difficulty of dealing with interdependence is clear in the way our governments are structured and our ministries function, in isolation to each other.

People/politicians need to be able to deal with adaptation, unpredictability, complexity.

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## PART II

In this vast area, I will tackle only three major issues, namely:

- the connection between democracy and development,
- the socio-cultural dimensions of plurality and the role played by elections,
- the conditions for building up consensus.

### DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT

It is my firm belief that democracy and development are two sides of the same coin. It has been difficult for Western countries to see this connection as their own experience of democracy took place alongside a continuous process of economic growth, prosperity, and gradual building-up of social security systems. However, since the 70's, in some way as a result of the oil shock, questions started being raised about democracy, its institutions and the political class which emerged through the Western type of democracy. (The European institutions of the EC have also contributed, particularly the European Parliament (EP), to the awareness of important limitations in the present democratic system. It is very clear, as it has been pointed out often in EP, that the Brussels Commission is not elected but chosen by the government who happen to be in power, the Council of Ministers is

not elected. Only the EP is elected and yet the final political decision pertains to the Council. In the European jargon, this is the democratic deficit of the <sup>European</sup> Eastern institutions. What is strange, however, is that by the end of 92 more than 80% of the economic and financial decisions will be taken in Brussels, thus taking away from national parliaments some of the flexibility in the budget and other decisions. However, the political class, including national parliaments, does not seem to notice that!

The steps taken a few years ago by 12 newly restructured democracies seem to point out to a more vocal expression of the link democracy/development. It was clear for Latin America, the Philipines, my own country, when they met in Manila, that the burden of the foreign debt, preventing development to take place, was creating the fear of a setback in the democratic process.

We see it now very clearly in Central and Eastern Europe. There is no denial of the craving for freedom. But the freedom was the all-encompassing cry for a better life and more humans / e conditions.

This does mean that there is a basic question about human rights. The civil and political human rights which express freedom and dignity, v.a.v the state, such as freedom of expression and of association go hand in hand with economic/social/cultural rights which guarantee food/shelter/education/work/information/medical care. Or, in other terms, one cannot in our time, envisage a political democracy where there is not a social, economic and cultural democracy. (I know that this correlation has been one of





the cleavages in the East/West confrontation but the way we arrive at it today does not spring forth from an ideological assumption but from the assessment of facts in the last decades).

However, in an increasing interdependent world, none of these aspects can be seen in isolation or taken in a simple relation of cause/effect. All interfere with each other in ways that sociology and political sciences are continuously unfolding before our eyes.

It is the complexity of such interdependence and its continuous changing pattern, that prevent us to apply any coherent "gestalt" theory, which would give foreseeable configurations. Hence, some basic questions:

- a. The satisfaction of "basic needs" can only be met in a sustainable way in the context of the medium and long-term perspectives in the economic, social and cultural field. However, democracy as lived in the Northern Hemisphere, is sustained by short-term mandates.

There is a definite problem here concerning what I call the continuity of the governing acts, regardless of the persons who are at the helm.

A new ethics has to emerge by which any government has to avoid creating negative conditioning to future governments.

In the conduct of public affairs, "predecessors are neither enemies nor rivals but legitimate heirs of the same political responsibilities, as decided by the popular ~~role~~".

I know this is not the common attitude. But is the only one that can assure that the power to be exercised is not



power for its own sake, power over people and above them, acting at its own discretion. It is rather power towards the accomplishment of the goals that can serve the people.

In my experience, if this attitude is not present, political democracy may be there with its elections and institutions but it won't eradicate misery and destitution.

In the long-run, its very existence will be at stake.

- b. Another difficulty is to reconcile the work and time needed for the decisions which commit the long-term with the urgency the population feels (and rightly so!)

Because people get tired of problems - they don't elect people for the leaders to tell them how the problems are, they know them over too well; they expect the leaders to solve the problems!

How do you tell the Russians that the problem is not to some extent, the lack of food but the fact that they need more and better railways and roads for the distribution of the goods?

It is there that in transition periods, the use of task forces working in close collaboration with the personnel of administration may be of great help. Even in countries of a relatively recent independence, the weight of public administration is already there.

There are other ways and means:

- a. a tremendous proximity to the people, to real life, to real

issues; examples:

- Filipe Gonzalez, talking concrete consequences on TV.
- Tina Auselmi, while Minister of Labour, keeping one day a week to hear people and visit them in their places of work.
- My own attempt to take decisions on the spots where they mattered.

A very clear mind for the spokes-man of the government, able to translate the arid decisions into understandable measures.

c. Still within this context one difficult problem, underlined by General Obasanjo is the way in which foreign investment is encouraged. I see it in three levels:

- c1. the legal framework of the foreign investment which determines what kind of goods can be purchased, the percentage of capital sharing in a new enterprise, the obligations in relation to the national norms.
- c2. the technological choices: the need for a very competent team, without financial vested interests, to help the decision-making process. In order to avoid:
  - obsolete material
  - outdated and polluting processes
  - satelisation in one specific field
- c3. the delocalization of enterprises, updated version of the international division of labour.

I am stressing this aspect because democracy ought to reinforce national sovereignty and in some cases these processes



make some countries incredibly dependent on others.

Need to show that our own process, if carried on honestly, needs to be explained over and over again to ears and minds only attuned to their own institutions.

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## PLURALISM AND ELECTIONS:

Within the "political conditionality" multi-partism gained such an importance that Poland, with all its passion, had 60 parties in the last elections!

Multi-partism is a way "to make" clear that the era of "one ruler" is over.

Two points of clarification are important, however.

First, what is at stake is basically an appeal to tolerance, respect for the other's opinion and an acknowledgement that in a given society there may be divergent views about the solutions to be adopted.

Political parties are essentially the organized expression of such views. According to modern constitutions they should express what is alive among the people. In fact, the polarization East/West and its correlated propaganda has also led the political parties to establish themselves as structures who sell their ideologies and impose them on people. This is a fundamental perversion of the democracy. We see in most European political parties their incapacity to absorb new ideas, to arise to new challenges and to widen their own horizon. Basically, this means that the State (which is the fortress to be conquered by political parties) is still dominating society.

For the parties to come back to express what is alive in society they need to change radically from that they are today.

To become what?

This question leads me to the second point of clarification. Even pluralism is not the most adequate expression for democracy as power of all.

Wouldn't plurality of forms of association and organization define better what is at stake?

If the civil society precedes the state in the sense that is there that the ideas that will guide the state will emerge, then it is the encouragement of an alive plurality that constitutes the best guarantee of a democracy.

The political parties would take a less dominant role if they would be part of a larger plurality of forces.

I consider extremely dangerous, paralysing and, in the long run, destructive of democracy, the tendency displayed in new democracies, like in my own country, to try to express the plurality of views in a society through the lines of cleavage of the political parties.

Plurality has to find its way between the tendency to fall back into a homogenized, simpler culture and the extreme fragmentation that may characterize the transition period. The fragmentation may be caused by differences in the set of ideas. But it may also be caused by the mere adherence to different leaders, because of their personal appeal or because of their ethnic belonging. Hence, the importance of a on-going process of deepening democracy.

Elections are the moments when the plurality of opinions is



universally expressed and the strength of each opinion is weighed.

a. This is why the freedom of elections, the absence of fraud or coercion, even a certain solemnity at the moment of the individual vote, are so important. It is the moment for unequivocal affirmation of citizenship and of its key-role in the direction a country is going to take.

The practice of international observers at national elections has increased. For some politicians it remains disputable. In my own understanding such practice must be looked at against the background of several events:

- In any case, at decisive elections, the foreign press is in the country and covers whatever it decides.
- I doubt that ad hoc groups, in a kind of self-appointed righteousness, will be helpful. They hurt the dignity of the host country.
- On the contrary, a group of eminent personalities, without any vested interests in the country concerned and who are not members of the international associations of political parties, could be chosen by a democratic international institution, either regional or world-wide or invited by the current government.
- Their task would be deeper than the vigilance or the uncovering of any trouble. It would be seen mostly as a sign of support and solidarity from the international community.

b. In the Northern hemisphere, there is, however, a type of



coercion which is exercised through the media.

The media, under the alibi of "freedom of expression", is very often taking sides:

- through the way news are given and pressures undergone;
- through the attitudes of journalists present in debates among candidates;
- through the sub-liminal messages it conveys during the period of the campaign.

We are still in the beginning of dealing with the media in a true democratic society: how to avoid the promiscuity between the media and the political class? How to make of the media what they should really be: a mediation in communication among the masses?

c. Another - more sophisticated - interference are the opinion polls.

They are a help to weigh chances, to give an idea of the forces present in society.

But the way in which they are regularly published creates for democracy in general and particularly for elections, some serious dangers:

- polls often emit the wrong signals and, yet, they determine what the candidates are going to say next, twisting often their own starting-point and program;
- polls function as mirrors where naively individuals see themselves, and, if their intention of vote is not very strong, they interiorise what they see or hear. They identify themselves with figures;

- this is possible because the analysis of polls by any media is based on the simple question: Who is going to win? And in our societies people still want to be with the obvious winner.

It is my conviction that opinion polls need also a legal framework so as to create a space where no signals are emitted and where people can, in good conscience, come to a decision about their vote.

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## CONSENSUS-BUILDING

One of the main tasks in democracy is the creation of a communal will, or, as some people say, the process of consensus-building.

It is a key-question in a time when there are no clear indicators for the future ahead.

It is decisive for the undertaking of major endeavours in a country.

In the Western democracy, we are in a deadlock in what concerns the communal will. The existing mechanisms are not enough for people to express themselves in due time and around the important issues. So the gap between the political class and the citizens is growing everyday.

The people don't believe anymore in the competence and capacity of achievement of their leaders.

The Reagan years have certainly contributed everywhere to transform the political debate into a political theater show, into yet another spectacle.....

The reaction of the people is rejection. and a total disbelief in the political class.

It is, in my view, at the level of consensus building that any democracy can express in an efficient way the status of freedom of individuals' opinions as well as its connection with the trends alive in the fabrics of society.



The difficulties of consensus-building cannot constitute, however, a pretext for falling back in any form of one-man or one-party rule.

There are some difficulties which should not be omitted. But it is clear that there is among the citizens of the Northern Hemisphere a growing uneasiness concerning the current practice of democracy.

The persons elected are less and less connected with their constituencies during the exercise of their term of office.

The electors felt that they are marginalized, not taken into account, as decisions are made without taking into account their thinking. One vote every 4 or 5 years becomes irrelevant.

The representative democracy has been devoid of its very essence - representation - and tends to become a mere formal democracy.

Several elements are at play in this dislocation of meaning. One of them is the role played by political parties.

In most countries, political parties have such a strict discipline of vote that the elected MP's instead of representing the views of their electors, are, in fact, representing the views of the political committee of their party.

In the context of party-led decisions in a national parliament, we enter another contradictory process.

It is true that a government that has won an absolute majority has better conditions to implement its decisions. But, with party politics at play, it can easily block the parliament, making of it

a government sounding board.

We encounter here another perversion of democracy.

How to counter-act such disfunction?

a. The obvious answer is to strengthen the representativity through a pact between the elected and his or her electors.

More over in the respect of fundamental human rights of the elected, no one should be asked to act, speak or vote against his conscience. It is an issue pertaining to basic ethics in political life and yet very much absent from its concrete practice.

What would be the consequences? There would be a more difficult but also more realistic formation of decision in parliament. It would correspond to majorities of ideas", constituted by MP's with the same view on issues regardless of their party-line. Such a practice would introduce in political life the concrete proof that politicians are listening to opinions and needs of the people and that the danger of behind-the-curtain arrangements would be avoided.

Though a criticism may be made based on the unpredictability coming out of the majorities of ideas, the gains would be such that they appear to me as worth trying.

b. Another way of counter-acting the way in which political parties occupy, with their own logic, all the political space, is the recourse to a more participatory democracy.

I am thinking of several elements. - first, the introduction of forms of direct democracy.

It can very well be built around the local space and local



power. Decisions concerning directly the lives of people in their settlements can be better answered and taken by the people themselves.

Ex: to cope with forest fires, to weigh pros and cons of a polluting industry, to establish centers of primary health-care, to use the school as a multipurpose cultural center, moreover, the local power is the one that can contribute more decisively for connections across national boundaries.

One important element to draw in more participation is the referendum both at the local and at the national level.

They are not only a guarantee of involvement of the citizens (if they so wish); they are also an opportunity for locally or nationally binding processes of political awareness and civic consciousness-raising.

Participation is, however, strongly jeopardized, by the discredit of politicians, specially by the corruption of some and by the way in which the political class covers it up.

An instrument used today in some Western countries seems to me one of the best: to ask of all politicians a formal declaration of what they possess before and after holding office otherwise political discussion are reduced to mutual attacks of dishonesty.

Another institution is also very important; the figures of the "ombudsman" to whom everyone is entitled to appeal.

c. A third element is the recognition of social actors who have something to say to the political life.

All forms of associations and organizations, however small and



however marginal, should be drawn into the process of decision-making.

The Northern hemisphere has used the concept of social partners in every issue concerning conflicts in the labour field..

This concept should be enlarged. It is necessary to define fundamental issues and to discover the actors whose interest is vital in each issue. They should be also social partners.

A whole new path is at stake here. I think that wherever democracy is new, there are possibilities for such dialogue to take place and for new institutions to emerge.

d. In the beginning of a democracy and in the heat of political struggle a country needs sometimes reference points of ethical values and peaceful negotiation.

I think that an appeal should be made to all the religious forces, to all religions to play a role in this regard. Of course, I am not thinking of a theocratic society, but of need for the different religions to speak in the name of the transcendent values present in each human person.

#### CONCLUSION

What is at stake in everything I have said is the need for a radical change in the concept and practice of democracy. At this stage of history there are no models.

The vitality of every society provides the dynamism and the concrete ideas necessary to establish new democratic institutions and new channels for decision making. Africa can make a decisive



contribution to the shaping of a wider and deeper democracy. Times for growth and imagination, times for doing what is just needed.

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