

Memória

25/08/2002

Cities, Urban Populations CFCO

1. During recent decades an unprecedented paradoxical "process" has been created. This paradoxical worldwide process has been regressive in nature: A totally liberated marketplace has come to be viewed as a "machine" whose duty is to parcel out opportunities, work and income. The State, from the market perspective, should adjust to its demands. To a certain extent this is neither essential nor necessary, nor is it a relatively independent instance. Civil society is a space where legal matters are created and defined in keeping with market requirements, with the object being to tailor this society to the State and politics.

2. Yet there is nothing more reactionary than this assumption, which became passé during the 19th and a large part of the 20th century, among other reasons due to the emergence of popular movements and the creation of social legislation. This assumption - a leap into the past - this huge step backward, owing to obscure ideological designs, has been touted as a major leap into the future.

3. On the other hand, this liberating effort has had other consequences resulting from this basic condition, opening the door to restoring the free citizen. It is a matter of an autonomous, independent citizen who is the basis of liberal society. Never has the idea of citizenship been discussed and debated as much as in recent years. And although it has generated its own denial within the limits of liberal society, the citizen has clearly become one of the paradigms of the free market. However, this free citizen has in many ways been changed by the new, current ideology.

4. Originally bearers of rights - rights that were a heritage generated by the Enlightenment and the rights that emerged with regard to social legislation (imposed in various countries owing to the emergence of first the workers and then the peasants movement) - modern or postmodern liberals have become bearers of obligations. Yet it must be said once and for all that they have become bearers of obligations simply because all of their rights have been expropriated.

5. The latter situation has gone hand in hand with a redefinition of the role of the State, manifested through processes whereby duties have been transferred to the so-called modern civil society. If there is anything that characterizes postmodern citizens, it is that they in effect have no right to health care, education, well-being, safety, housing and work, because these areas are no longer linked to the goals of the State: They aren't rights that arise out of or that link society to the State. The subject of citizenship, my brothers and sisters, is no longer anchored in the recognition of rights; this is a problem that each citizen must face, individually, within the scope of his or her obligations.

6. This paradoxical process, better known as the neoliberal model, has brought about the destruction of the planet, with the result that 70% of people live in cities without public services, without environmental sanitation and jobs, amid poverty and social exclusion. It has imposed a single way of thinking, and is attempting to destroy our cultures.

7. In order to reverse this paradoxical process, we of the Continental Front of Communal Organizations (CFCO), founded in Managua in 1987, are fostering a process for creating solidarity, one that combines cooperation, sharing and collective action, while placing human beings at the center of socio-economic development. It includes a new way of engaging in politics and of building multiple human relationships based on consensus and citizens actions. We are participating in the processes for democratizing society, we are promoting justice and the equality of sexes. In short, we want to live in peace, restoring the fabric of society and, needless to say, the social nature of the State, which places human beings with their rights

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in the center of government policy.

8. We want to build a society with rights, we want dwellers with the right to their city, enduring cities that take part in maintaining our land, forests, water, air, and our cultures, so that our social works and initiatives will never die out.

9. We city dwellers have shown that we are able to create beauty and produce our food, our cities and living space. We simply want to transform our resistance into a liberating action that we ourselves will bring to fruition, we want the change in our daily life that we dream about for the world, if it is possible to build a world in complete harmony with nature.

10. We of the CFCO have, in conjunction with the HIC, contributed to building our own paradigm of equitable and sustainable cities.

11. In the Dominican Republic, the struggle involves a secure land ownership, with massive mobilization to demand that the government provide documented legalization for peoples settlements. The most significant struggle in Nicaragua involves blocking legal efforts from continuing to evict people from settlements created during the guerrilla war, while also fighting for services, education and health care. In Honduras there is organized resistance in order to restore land buried by Hurricane Mitch, to demand relocation on land where there are services and food. In El Salvador they are fighting for land, services, housing, health care and food, while opposing the dollarizing of the economy. Our Cuban brothers are involved in an exemplary struggle against imperialism and for people with dignity who have food, services, culture, housing and more. After the fall of the Eastern European countries, they have been forced to make their own way, as Jose Marti so well stated it. The struggle in Bolivia has toppled the imperialism that privatized water, including all of its sources, with the government forced to back down by the peoples heroic struggle. In Brazil, Uruguay, Chile, Guatemala and Mexico the struggle has focused on improving living spaces. All of us are aware of how the struggle has become particularly radicalized in Argentina, since the government has privatized everything and allowed the vast banking capital to strip the people of their savings.

12. Yet we are also contributing to consolidating democracy, since a large number of militants in the peoples movement have risen to local power through elections. Consequently we find them governing in major cities such as Sao Paulo, Porto Alegre, Santo Andre, Caracas, Bogotá, San Salvador, Managua, Greater Buenos Aires, Montevideo and Mexico City.

13. Careful note should be taken that the peoples movement has rightly understood the importance of production. Therefore we are fostering an economy based on solidarity, micro industries and biological agriculture. On a small scale, of course, though we hope to find a niche that shows it is possible to construct sustainable, democratic and equitable societies.

15. There is no doubt that the people are capable of building a possible world from our human cosmo-vision, and in absolute harmony with nature, without being chained to predatory capitalist development, better known as the neoliberal model. We have the experience and know-how to achieve utopia. We, the brothers and sisters of the CFCO, are aware of this commitment, and we are bent on achieving this noble goal.

English text by volunteer translator Charles Johnson