

GREAT CRISES, GREAT OPPORTUNITIES

Crisis may give rise to salvation
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Not only is the immense economic scaffold collapsing, but also the concept of power and its ideological foundations. We must take into account all of the dimensions of this disaster in order to rebuild using different materials. And above all, at the very core of public action, we must reestablish the “democratic principles” which, in an error of history, have been inexplicably replaced by the laws of the marketplace.

We must take advantage of this crisis in order to change our course and our destiny. Those who ignored and ridiculed the recommendations that we made in the early 1990s, convinced that an economic system based on commercial interests instead of justice is doomed to disaster, cannot now continue to ignore and ridicule proposals for change. Those who should now be judged cannot be judges. They have been “rescued” by their governments and have lost all authority to express their opinions concerning proposals to “rescue” people! Those who, like the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO, failed to speak up when they should have must now keep silent.

After the “technological bubble” of the 1990s, the “real estate bubble”. During this period in which “sovereign funds” were denied countries with a “globalized system”, those who remained outside have accumulated

immense fortunes, while often ignoring the conditions of workers and human rights.

This is a crisis *of* the capitalist system, not *within* it, despite arguments to the contrary from the most fervent champions of the market economy who later intend to continue down this runaway course, which due to its lack of values and rules of good governance has proved to be a resounding failure.

It is imperative, above all, to refuse to turn to a “new capitalism”, but rather to seek a new global economic system based on justice and regulated by institutions fully integrated within a totally reformed, or perhaps re-founded, United Nations, endowed with the human, technological and economic resources to enable it to act expediently and to apply to transgressors the full force of the law.

Much discussion has centered lately on the need to urgently reform the International Monetary Fund... when what actually requires reform is the whole United Nations system, commencing with its inclusion in the FMI and World Bank, as well the World Trade Organization, which the United States directly excluded from the scope of the United Nations in 1992. Why did Europe recently relinquish its leadership role in the establishment of a new world economic system? This is not a financial problem, but rather a far-reaching political question that the EU should have undertaken with authority.

From the prevailing unilateral governance of “globalization” to a multilateral one. A strong United Nations, reaffirmed in its initial unfulfilled mission to “prevent war”, that is, to build peace on behalf of the “future generations”, our supreme commitment. The United Nations,

UNESCO –so that we do not return to the peace of security instead of the security of peace— the World Bank ... all must be reformed and confirmed in their initial mandates. It is true that an attempt has been made to discredit and undermine the authority of the United Nations and its institutions.

Only with an adequate supranational authority can the markets be regulated. And with the immediate elimination of tax havens, which would likewise prompt the disappearance of trafficking in drugs, arms, patents, capital, persons (!). It is clear that markets are not “self-regulating”, but rather give rise to all types of unpunished transgressions, mafias, etc. at the supranational level.

At the national level it is necessary that government, political parties, and union and management representatives rapidly subscribe agreements (the Moncloa Pacts are good examples), so that the benefits of financial guarantees can quickly trickle down to the people.

Several measures must be adopted immediately:

- Heavy public investments must be made (in energy sources; transportation; water production and distribution; food production using agriculture, aquaculture and biotechnology; housing; ...).
- Financing of and from cities must be provided and regulated, being essential for promoting employment and commercial and industrial activities, especially with regard to SMEs.
- Just as hefty funding has been found to rescue financial institutions, citizens must now likewise be “rescued” with: i) family loans (an

excellent model is Brazil's "family-school loans", which have likewise been implemented in some of Spain's autonomous communities); ii) unemployment benefits (with measures such as a "basic citizen's income", as a general principle that could initially be extended to the unemployed); iii) benefits for business start-ups or commercial activities; iv) benefits for all of those who with a little help can continue to finance their homes with renegotiated mortgages; v) reality cannot be profoundly transformed without profound knowledge: in consequence, decisive policies are required to promote R&D/Innovation with active collaboration from businesses and funds provided by the EU.

At the international level certain initiatives could be adopted immediately:

- the necessary funds should be made available to ensure adequate nutrition on a world-wide scale and to promote the fight against AIDS (an amount which would really be insignificant compared to the "rescue" funds);
- the Millennium Objectives should be activated, especially the fight against poverty, redefining the terms and amounts and finally granting the promised development aid along with the cancellation of foreign debt so that, among other positive results, emigration would in the future be voluntary;
- a United Nations summit should be promptly called in which, in contrast to the 2005 summit, the funds necessary to eradicate hunger should not be limited (there was only sufficient funding to by 2015 "reduce by half the number of those starving" (!);
- rapidly consider the immediate application of formulas such as fees on currency transactions, which have once again recently

been well planned and proposed at the United Nations and included in the Declaration on Innovative Sources of Financing of Development in the “Action Against Hunger and Poverty” subscribed in New York on September 24, 2008 by Presidents Michelle Bachelet, Lula, and Rodríguez Zapatero, and the French Minister of Foreign Affairs B. Kouchner.

- Reduction of the impact of natural and provoked disasters by putting into practice the United Nations 1989-1999 Decennial Proposals and the European Union’s recent (GAP) provisions to prevent the effects of recurring episodes (hurricanes, floods, fires, etc.), given that even in the most technologically-advanced countries there is still a total lack of preparation and much social vulnerability in this area.
- Priority attention should be given to Africa, taking swift steps to eliminate the shameless exploitation in the Congo’s Kivu territory in the mining of coltan (a columbite-tantalite mineral used in computers and mobile telephones) as well as situations such as is the case in Angola –with the exploitation of so many resources, with so much oil and gold ripped from the land— while the people subsist on less than two dollars per day ...

In summary, we must rapidly facilitate the transition from a war economy to an economy of global development.

Civil society now has the opportunity –which does not present itself frequently— to promote radical transformations. After so many years of ignored recommendations and unheeded prophecies, the intellectual,

scientific and academic community must calmly but firmly make itself heard. The time has come to demand an active role –which no longer has to be face-to-face, given modern communications technologies such as SMS and Internet...--so that governments will know that the days of resignation and silence are over. Subjects must become citizens and passive spectators must become actors, in order to implement profound changes in the form and substance of the exercise of power. The great transition from a culture of force and imposition to a culture of the word requires lifetime education at all levels, promoting creativity and cultural diversity, supporting scientific research and health for all ...

Great opportunities, great responsibilities that must be assumed by citizens who have the most to offer during this change. The time for citizen power. The time for people and peoples. Crises provide an opportunity to build a new world, to reinstate the universal ethical principles of justice and genuine democracy. We must be reminded daily of the wise words of Sophocles: “When the decisive hours have passed it is futile to run to catch them”.

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