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Universal Declaration of Human Rights

FEAR, REBELLION, FREEDOM

*“The voice / that could have been the remedy / but for fear / was nothing”.*

All of us should read and reread the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that it is worth the effort to continue fighting for the great ethical principles our daily behavior. In order to realize that we "are endowed with reason and conscience" to remedy the temptation to resort to force.

This “active reading” is urgent, since our present errors are not being remedied. We are not decidedly replacing plutocracy with multilateralism. We are not finally closing tax havens that facilitate trafficking (in drugs, weapons and people!...). We are not regulating speculation or irresponsible economics. We are not off-setting the power of the media. We are not taking steps toward a new productive model of sustainable global development. As was the case before the crisis, the important thing is to barter, sell... to manufacture at the lowest possible cost by delocalizing to the East, where no one cares about the living conditions of the “manufacturers” in those countries, nor whether their human rights are protected...

Although they were incapable of foreseeing or preventing the crisis, public institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the

World Bank, as well as hardly impartial private institutions, are now acting in the interests of those who caused the present serious situation.

And what are the scientific, academic and artistic communities doing? They are generally distracted, subjugated spectators, controlled from afar by the media that prevent them from reflecting on our serious problems and acting in consequence.

It is time to take action against those who perceive the world simply as an immense market and the world's inhabitants as mere consumers. It is time to apply our great stock of available knowledge to meet the challenges of a raging environment.

We must recover from our apathy, our fear. The first paragraph of the Preamble to the Universal Declaration that it has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of human kind "the advent of a world in which human beings, freed from fear and want, shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief...".

From time immemorial humans have existed in very limited spaces, both physically and spiritually. Thus, with the exception of a few great minds capable of overcoming that confinement, they lived in fear of angry and merciless gods and lords of the manor here on earth. All possible efforts have been made to prevent citizens from abandoning their status as vassals. Until the 1980s education was always limited to teaching basic literacy and basic instruction on the part of the colonial powers, and authoritarian systems promoted indoctrination, dependence and herd mentality. There is no greater

ignorance than the ignorance of a trapped man, and “kidnapped thought” (as Susan George calls it) leads to superstition... And this generates fanaticism, dogmatism, obstinacy and cowardice.

When at last there are those who are able to become “educated,” that is, able to “be themselves”,... when the time has come not only to vote and be counted in elections, but to count and to be taken into account,... then the immense powers of the media unfurl their wings to reduce those citizens to mere passive spectators, to indifferent witnesses who can be activated and deactivated with Pavlov’s famous bell.

Until one day, after years and years of fragile and manipulative democracies, modern communications technology arrives with the possibility of building in cyberspace what “real life” has here-to-fore been able to prevent. With mobile phones and internet we can now change a reality that has been obstinately formed and remains unperturbed. We can now mobilize millions of human beings capable at last of joining their voices and wishes, to prompt a *peaceful but steadfast rebellion*, which the guardians of inertia and privilege, of the storehouses of the past, never allowed us to even dream of.

And this is because they ignore the next paragraph of the Preamble of the Universal Declaration: “Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be *compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion* against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law...”. Anything that subjugates and reduces human

beings must be eliminated to prevent a justified popular uprising among those who have suffered so much and continue to do so.

But to transition from passive recipients to active emissaries was very difficult and frequently risky. In addition to the ballot box, other forms of expression lacked influence and were often rigged. But with distance participation the emancipation of citizens vis-à-vis the powers that be will change radically in a very few years.

In that way, in less time than many may foresee, the 21<sup>st</sup> century will (finally!) be the century of the people, of the force of reason and never more of the reason of force, of a history worthy of the faculties that distinguish each unique human being, thus ending the history described by Fukoyama, which has so tarnished human dignity from the beginning of time. Thus, the last “Whereas” of the Preamble of the Declaration that inspired this article will have been implemented: “Considering that the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and *better standards of life in larger freedom*”... .

Federico Mayor Zaragoza

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