

NEW MILITANCIES FOR NEW TIMES

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Notes

These pages are dedicated to the parochial community of San Rafael where I have learnt that it is possible and worthwhile to fight for a more evangelical Church, and to all the communities that are struggling against the winds wishing to erase Vatican II. May these pages serve to nourish hope and enthusiasm. I dedicate them to little Irene who will inherit the future that we are endeavouring to construct.

We frequently experience impotence vis-à-vis situations of injustice and suffering that the majority of humanity has to go through. We would like to do "something" but we do not know "what"...

These pages attempt to serve as roads of reflection and conduct: without exhausting every possibility, we suggest styles, habits, transforming and "dissident" acts that indicate other ways of thinking and living, other ways of structuring our personal, social and international relations.

We make our suggestions with the firm hope that this world of ours can change (a little bit, at least), and with the conviction that the greatest obstacle to change is not the undeniable complexity of problems, but the self-interested resistance of the powerful; we are, moreover, well aware of the prudence and humility that are necessary to deal with the great difficulties facing us ...

Words are theory and nothing more until they are put into practice. The words of this booklet will be nothing if they are not turned into life, if they are not reflected on, if they are not shared, if they are not experienced. This done, they could contribute to creating a new reality, a different way of life more human, more dignified, more in keeping with the Gospel.

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1. FOR A "DISSIDENT SOLIDARITY"

1. CAN WE DO SOMETHING?

Formulating solutions is no easy matter, and when this is done, often only values and ideals are proposed giving them no definite form or making them have no repercussion on daily life (this has the advantage of avoiding any commitment) or all the responsibility is put on international organisms, governments, etc. (which again involves no commitment either).

But, can nothing more really be done? A first answer could be to reply: nothing or very little or to limit ourselves to contributing just that little grain of sand, which once done, we return to our daily life, to our own little problems. But that basically is not right. Firstly, because our problems can only with difficulty be really "ours" (unemployment, housing, environment, health, etc.): they are one of the many aspects of the problems of the world that exist today in the context we live in; and secondly, because we can do and transform things much more than we imagine.

But if we overcome this first moment, and if the desire "to do something" exists, the lack of concrete cues and the immense complexity of the problems of the world as perceived by us, provoke in us rage, impotence, cynicism or inhibition. For this reason it becomes necessary to formulate concrete and achievable proposals and to create spaces of dissidence where one can share more human experiences, learn to be more efficient and strengthen aspirations and hopes.

2. WHY "NEW" MILITANCIES?

Because the problems are new: globalisation, political disenchantment, fragmentation, social exclusion, etc.; so the answers will have to be new too. And because not only are we under the dominion of new powers that provoke new problems, but we are also exposed to *the surprising capacity of these new powers to absorb, assimilate and neutralise all proposals* that question - even potentially - the established order (think of what has occurred to the word "solidarity" ...).

Creativity, then, is necessary to articulate new ways of confronting new powers that threaten human dignity. These new forms of struggle we propose calling new forms of militancy.

1. *Militancy involves de-centring*: seeing and situating oneself in the world in a different way. One can see the world only from one's (man or woman's) own point of view, from the point of view of "my world", which places me on the side of the favoured ones, or one can try to see the world from the

view point of the whole of humanity, which signifies placing oneself automatically on the side of the victims and to see things from their view point. 80% of the people that live on this planet suffer while the other 20% live fantastically. The majority of humanity is composed of victims. If you wish to situate yourself in the world from the viewpoint of the whole of humanity, you will have to do so from the viewpoint of the victims since they are the great majority. The existence of injustice is real and objective: this is borne out by the victims. To take the option of not excluding, of seeing the world from the viewpoint of all people, signifies acknowledging that the majority suffer.

All this involves assuming the risk that arises from entering into conflict; in a society with structural injustices, where poverty is a social and not an individual, problem, to take sides with the weak is to place oneself against the strong and their way of life.

2. *Militancy signifies integrating in one's own project of life a style of dissident solidarity* that questions, that grows, that converts itself into history, that involves a meeting with the victims of an unjust system. A solidarity that seeks justice and not self-complacency.

Currently, however, volunteer workers and "solidarity" are becoming increasingly non-critical, serious reflection and comprehension of problems and their causes are not undertaken, the criteria and emotional impulses that are followed do not question or transform life and when one has to concern oneself with "more important things", the struggle is abandoned. "Solidarity" is used as an advertising slogan, or as a product of consumption, its emotional aspects are exploited, and it is forgotten only to be remembered with the next war crisis or environmental mishap that the communication media wish to draw our latest attention to.

A consequence of this is that one generally leaves everything as it is, one apologises, and at best "has an experience" of marginalisation (as if marginalisation was something to be tasted like a tropical fruit... instead of being suffered!).

Solidarity and volunteer work which were before potentially dangerous because they could question many things, is now assumed, integrated and is even used as a publicity gag and an object of consumption. There is no longer any danger of it questioning or transforming anything. Militancy involves a struggle for a better world in a project of life, from the stance of a dissident solidarity that questions and transforms life because it forms part of the fundamental option of the individual.

3. *Militancy requires coherence and does not accept "watertight departments"*, conditions, time limits ... It is incompatible with the non-integrated lives that many people of the western world lead: lives with closed "departments", having no inter-communication with each other; lives in which certain values are exhibited in the work field (competitiveness, efficacy...), other values are employed in the family sphere, and still others in one's free time, etc.

In this way it is easier to change options that should be vital and total: one can easily change one's religious belief because it is a "department" of life which has no connection with the others (family, work, leisure, politics, ethics...). And moving a "piece" of this structure does not change anything of the whole, because there is no relation of one piece with the other... Militancy does not permit these possibilities. It requires *integrated people*, with no separate "departments", ruled by a logic that structures their whole lives in every sphere and relation with the world.

4. *Militancy has as a premise hopeful lucidity that avoids self-justification.* We cannot always be as coherent as we would like; there are always actions, situations, acts in which we find ourselves or participate that we cannot avoid and which generate injustice. The only antidote is lucidity. If we do not deceive ourselves, if we try not to justify ourselves, the finding of ways for coherence and justice will be just a question of time, or of knowledge or of opportunity; it will not be an ethical question. Lucidity without hope can provoke disenchantment and bitterness. Where to find this hope is either a gift or another personal "militancy", or perhaps both things, depending upon the personal or historical moment in time. We, Christian men and women, find the hope and impulse to act in that "mad Man" who broke all schemas and moulds...
5. *Militancy needs an ideological content.* We need to know where we are heading, what is the model of society that we want to build. If we do not know towards where we are going, we will not easily be able to advance; with difficulty we will be able to collaborate and share with others. It is not easy to build an elaborate model of the world we want but we can choose among values, among priorities and situations that give shape to a more or less human world for all men and women. For example, to ignore or to reject child labour is an option that shapes one future or another.
6. *Militancy needs spaces of dissidence where we can share and discuss all these questions,* where we can learn and strengthen ourselves mutually in this small and daily task. Families, all sorts of groups that already exist or can be created can be places where these small (and at times, big) dissidence we propose can be invented and nourished.

A warning: All this is thought and reflected from the position of the wellbeing of the North. It does not wish to be a Europe-centred reflection, because it is framed within the contradictions of our world and with a deliberate world perspective: from the stance of the whole of humanity. It arises from the contradictions that we are exposed to - perhaps with more vehemence - in the North and it wants to show how one can act from the North to reduce and transform those contradictions. We do not wish to be Europe-centred in our perspective; we are so only in our proposals of action, because this is our objective: to propose lines of action, real and possible, from the position of our daily reality.

3. HOW TO DO IT?

We live in a context of globalisation. This is basically an economic concept that makes reference to the unification of the world market and the victory of the capitalist economic system from the vantage point of neoliberal postulates. We can also talk of a cultural globalisation in the measure in which one can identify a dominating cultural model that imposes itself on the others. This victory of capitalism has very important consequences in all the dimensions of our life (social, political, economic) and we shall make reference to these later.

3.1. New forms of power

Globalisation has not only transformed these dimensions but also the way of articulating the *relations of power*. Before, power was structured in a hierarchical way, vertically, pyramid-shaped. The centres of power were clear and defined, one knew who gave the orders and against whom one had to fight. It is no longer like this. With globalisation power is structured in a spread out fashion, horizontally, with different power centres that are related with networks that transmit information in a quick and agile way. It is an agile, flexible and diffuse structure.

An example: institutions with hierarchical schemas, vertical and authoritarian, where information circulates very slowly, with many intermediary steps, do not adapt well to globalisation. They are ineffective and slow. This is the problem, one of the problems, of the hierarchical Church, of the army, of some parties and syndicates. On the other hand, NGOs, or new social movements, like house squatting, have this other way of functioning and adapt perfectly to globalisation. So it is also necessary to change the way of doing things, to change methodology.

We have to occupy spaces of autonomy with values and projects contrary to the inhuman - hence illogical - logic of the globalisation we are being subjected to. Referring to the "house-squatting" movement, we propose the necessity of being squatters of globalisation. For this it is necessary to create micro-projects that contradict the logic of the neoliberal world market, from a local perspective and with local objectives, working from the bottom. In the local sphere it is easier to adopt values and options contrary to globalisation: the option in favour of those who are poorer and weak, the option for democracy, solidarity, equality, respect for nature, the fraternal community that Jesus wanted...

But these local micro-projects must be framed in the macro-project of an alternative society. The perspective must be local and global at the same time, and so too should be the actions: local and global at the same time. The objectives must be global, and there should exist networks that coordinate and multiply the capacity of incidence, through which information circulates quickly and agilely.

We have already participated in some tests of this new way of doing things: the campaign against anti-personal mines, against child exploitation, against

external debt, protests against Seattle, Prague, etc. It is, simply, to globalise resistance.

Having reached this point we may feel overwhelmed: as though it were so easy to create networks! It is already difficult to try to live with a little of coherence! But we, Christian men and women, have networks; we have links and a territorial structure that can serve as a base for these networks or to increase their efficacy. This is one of the contributions that we can make from the Church to the world of today... We have only to succeed in getting a different type of information, an information contrary to this inhumane globalisation to circulate through these networks, that this different information carries on creating and re-conquering spaces of autonomy. We already have the networks, the contacts, what we need is to transform them, to "squat" them, in short.

3.2. New protective mechanisms

Globalisation has developed "safety mechanisms", traps, that function almost automatically, because by repetition and saturation we end up accepting them without discussion and without questioning. These mechanisms help to neutralise critical visions and questioning. Before acting, one has to know these "*globalisation traps*".

The language

Commencing from the name itself: "globalisation". Not all things and not all peoples are globalised. Only some aspects are globalised (finances, computer science...) and only a small part of the population (the rich of the USA, Europe, Japan and the élite of the South) is globalised. The commerce of manufactured products (which benefit rich countries) are globalised; not so raw materials (which would benefit poor countries). Finances can circulate freely and rapidly throughout the world, but on the other hand manual labour is not globalised: people (especially if they are poor) cannot go to work where they choose. Only money and manufactured products are allowed to go where they want. They have more rights than people.

If really globalisation was produced on a full scale, not in part, the perspective would be very different. Of the 6,000 million people in the world 5,000 million suffer because for them life is a constant struggle, not something to be taken for granted; only 1,000 million can take life (and a whole series of rights, services, goods, etc.) for granted. To have a global vision of the world we have to look at it from the viewpoint of the 5,000 million people that suffer. This global perspective would transform economy, politics, etc. Imagine what would be the priorities with respect to investments, for example, or how commercial relations would change, if they were decided by the majority of the people who suffer.

"Divide and conquer"

Globalisation divides us as people: we have certain values when working, others when in the family, others when in leisure time, and still others when in family

circles... We are people who are divided, de-structured, and ever so weak. It is necessary to salvage the firmness and strength of people as a whole with just one logic, with just one set of values for all the different spheres of life.

"Nothing can be done because everything is so very complicated"

Everything appears so complicated, nothing can be done, one can influence nothing since problems are so big and complex. On the one hand, we can be connected by computer networks to all points of the world, we can send all sorts of ships to space to study all sorts of details about all sorts of planets, we can connect all the stock exchanges of the world; but on the other hand, we are incapable of constructing a well of drinking water for everybody or abolishing child labour...???

Here no technical problems exist, only political and ethical options. Let us not deceive ourselves or allow ourselves to be deceived. The space race is unquestionably more difficult technically than wells of drinking water, but it is a priority, though no human life depends on the former which is certainly not the case with the latter. Why is it always much "easier and simple" to do something that always benefits the same people, and "complicated" that which benefits the poorer and weak people...?

2. WHAT TO DO? ECONOMIC MILITANCY

Economy is the power that dominates our world. It is not a new power, but it is certainly new in the way it is structured, in the way it imposes itself and invades with its logic all dimensions of human and non-human life. We live in a context of globalised neoliberal economy. This signifies two things: the domination of the market in economic matters; and the domination of economy on all other dimensions of human and ecological life.

The unquestionable domination of the economy signifies that it now knows no boundaries, neither geographical nor ethical. It reaches all corners of the planet, all dimensions of life (political, ethical, religious, affective, ecological, genetic, sanitary, etc.) and all are united by a single economic flow, as the only single link.

The classic methods of struggle (strikes, demonstrations, etc.) have increasingly less application today in this neoliberal economic system where business entrepreneurs are very often thousands of kilometres away from consumers, where labour flexibility threatens with unemployment and redundancy every man or woman that dares to fight...

This situation is new and calls for new forms of struggle and resistance that can re-situate the economy to place it at the service of people, of justice and of peace. *It is necessary to put ethical limits to the economy*, so that all the other human dimensions (politics, ethics, religion, ecology, etc.) recover their space.ⁱⁱ

1. RESISTING CONSUMERISM

The most difficult and definitive struggle in the economic sphere is *to resist consumerism*. This, in the context in which we live, is a revolution. In the context of inequality and unlimited consumerism, trying to discern what is absolutely necessary and live with this would constitute a great, silent, discreet and definitive victory because the economy, as it is shaped currently, is based on the unlimited consumption of 20% of the world population. In the measure in which we keep on eroding this aspect, we will be eroding the base of the "domination of the economy".

This, which is seemingly simple, is extremely difficult, because at every moment of the day and place we are exposed to the influence of advertising, fashion, marketing, etc., and because this has become part and parcel of our mental framework, totally assumed by us. We are not talking of any single specific act of consumerism but of a style of life and of an association of meaning. And so, "standard of living" is intimately linked with level of consumption and consumption with "well-being".

We live in a consumer society, the "only" possible society, moreover, the best because it is the society of "well-being". This is learnt in the family, at school, on the street, at work, TV, university... And it is on account of this that it is so difficult to question consumerism because consumerism is well being and when one questions consumerism, one is actually questioning the expectations of well being that people have. "I consume, therefore I exist", is the first axiom from which all others derive.

To resist consumerism signifies living a different style and meaning of life. One has to be rooted in the "counter-values" of simplicity, austerity, sharing, justice. One needs necessarily that hopeful lucidity we referred to earlier to be able to discern what is really needed and what is superfluous. The moment we give up the response of meaning consumption evokes in us, we will be opening up a "space" for appeals, doubts, questions.

Freed from the objects that suffocate us, we will discover people, our own selves, others. People are more complex than objects; people give more "problems" but the satisfactions they give are deeper and sincere!

It could help to note down during one or two months our expenses. Perhaps we are not even conscious of what we spend. Writing them down, comparing them, commenting on them with the family or other groups that we form part of may help us to see with greater light, to share and to spread alternative ways of satisfying needs, of making good use of objects, of exchanging services, etc.

2. JUST COMMERCE AND SOCIAL ECONOMY

Just commerce and social economy are spheres in which we can satisfy needs from the stance of economy placed at the service of the person and not the person at the service of the economy. Textile and food products, handicrafts and various services such as clothes collection, plumbing, bricklaying, etc. can be obtained in this sector.

Just commerce starts from the premise that one of the causes of the poverty of the countries of the South is the unjust commercial relations, inherited from the structure imposed by the metropolis in the period of colonisation. And so, commercial relations based on more egalitarian, just and respectful terms can be both transforming and dignifying. The fundamental principle of just commerce is to guarantee the producers of the south a just compensation for their work. To make this possible, just commerce acquires directly from the farmers and artisans of the South their products, eliminating thereby intermediaries and speculators. In this way producers are assured a greater income and a just recompense for their work.

There are a great number of shops selling products of just commerce in Europe and Spain. Information on where to get these products as well as publications on this subjectiii can be obtained from several NGOs.

Social economy is formed by companies, mercantile entities that sell goods and services to the market, trying to be profitable and competitive. Their primary purpose is social since the main objective they seek is not the profit of their owners or shareholders but social aims such as job creation, access to the work market, etc. One starts from the premise that work is the best means to bring about the social insertion of people that suffer exclusion. Here, formation is combined with personal and social support and work practice.

Companies of insertion offer people the possibility of holding a job post temporally till they are in condition to enter the labour market.

Special work centres are end-oriented: they offer permanent job posts to people who are normally handicapped so that in this way they can have access to the labour market in a dignifying and normal way.

Co-operatives of associated work are also a type of business organisation that seek the participation and co-responsibility of the people who form it. The lack of efficiency that some of these co-operatives suffer from, does not take away their value as an economic proposal of co-participation.

There exist too a series of companies and mercantile entities that without being specifically oriented to groups of people who suffer exclusion, give great importance to *alternative values* like participation, ecology, solidarity, etc: associations of consumers, delivery by bicycle, biological agriculture, alternative sources of energy, etc.

They are oriented towards values and alternative mechanisms of organisation. They form a wide and heterogeneous group where many interesting proposals can be found, together with others of a more obscure and less defined nature.

This sector, especially the companies and entities that incorporate marginalised people do not have a legal framework that defines and regulates them and which would assure them of institutional support and economic aids that they need to carry out their work. These companies give work to people with lower productivity which it is necessary to compensate with aids, costs reduction, special fiscal treatment, etc. since they play a very important social function (which will always be more dignifying and perhaps cheaper than passive aids to these groups of people).

Another difficulty is financing which in the present conditions of the financial market turns out to be particularly difficult. Here, a decisive role can be played by savings and alternative investments, which we shall speak about in the next section.

A word of warning: *it is useless, or of very little use, to change the type of objects or services we consume if we do not change our patterns of consumption.* It is not a question of changing the products we consume while consuming the same amount, but of changing our life-style. To consume less and share more, so that others can live with more dignity.

Opting for a *solidarity-motivated austerity* that embraces these alternative economic options is what radically matters and transforms. If not, we will only fall a victim to a "solidarity-motivated snobbism", that could give a very good image but would change nothing.

3. SAVINGS AND ALTERNATIVE INVESTMENTS

The money and savings that are deposited by us in commercial and savings banks are not always destined to investments that we are in agreement with: contaminating factories, child or exploited hand-labour, armament industries...

We have no control over the destination of our money. On the other hand, social economy has a serious problem: a lack of initial capital. No bank entity is favourably

disposed to give a loan to these initiatives or if they are, they do so on unacceptable conditions.

Ethical and solidarity-inspired financing considers economy to be at the service of people and uses the traditional instruments of financing (banks, savings bank, credit co-operatives, investment funds, etc.) in coherence with its own ethical values.

In this way it can safeguard the right of investors to know where the financial entities are investing their savings and also the possibility of choosing investments with social and ecological content.

In Europe and the USA there have been existing for decades various experiences of this type: ethical banks, investment funds, etc. In Spain, however, there still does not exist an ethical bank, although there are some interesting proposals.

- Fets is an association, founded in the summer of 1999 with the object of promoting ethical and solidarity-oriented financing in Catalonia. Its objectives range from promoting savings and solidarity-inspired, ethical investments to reflection, investigation and the spreading of information on these questions.
- COOP 57, a Catalan co-operative of financial services to co-operatives on the basis of ethical principles.
- OIKOCREDIT, an entity that destines the totality of its funds to financing micro-credits for development projects in the poor countries of the South. (www.oikocredit.org)

4. BOYCOTTS AND CONSUMER STRIKES

A boycott is a social campaign organised among consumers that decide against buying temporally one or more products of certain companies with the aim of obtaining that the reduction in sales volume would oblige the company to accept the proposals of consumers, proposals which generally revolve around ethical, social or ecological demands. The decision of not buying has to be accompanied by a letter, or some other informative action that advises the company of the motive and the reasons for the boycott. This proposal is within the logic of the market and profitability since it pressures companies in what is their first objective: selling.

The boycott on Nestlé on account of the promotion of artificial milk in African countries, and the boycott on Levi's and Nike to eliminate child labour are some of the more well known ones.

A great capacity of resistance is required on the part of the organisation that proposes it: companies that call for boycotting are generally big enterprises that have strong and clever assessment teams and have no difficulty in initiating costly and high spending legal suits that not all NGOs can afford.

A second difficulty with this proposal is the lack of consciousness of consumer men and women about their own strength. The idea - erroneous - that an immense number of people are necessary to boycott a product, induces one to reach the conclusion that it is

not worth the trouble since an individual action will contribute nothing at all. This is false. Actually it is not even necessary that sales should fall for a company to question their business policy and to yield to the pressures of consumers. It is sufficient for profits or the increase in sales to be less than forecast.

When boycotts can have repercussions in Southern countries, it is absolutely necessary to include in their design the opinion of the sectors affected in the poorer countries that will probably be the weakest of all those involved in the boycott and who will suffer directly their consequences. With our Europe-centredness that is so part of our mental make-up that it is difficult to overcome, this has not always been done. In the Spanish State there does not exist an easy access to information on boycotts that are being carried out in Europe and the USA, where these actions have a greater tradition. Granted that the greater part of companies is multi-national, it will not be very difficult to collaborate in boycotts that are already under way. Here is a challenge for NGOs and consumer associations who could collaborate in informing and spreading information about these actions so that overcoming state boundaries, they can have greater repercussion.

5. CAMPAIGNS

Campaigns are actions that are based on the strength of the word and denunciation. Their aim is to inform about different ethical questions to create awareness and to provoke changes in the opinions, conduct and attitudes of people, companies and institutions. Campaigns can be associated with other initiatives - always non-violent - such as demonstrations, meetings, human chains, sitting-ins, celebrations, signature collections, hunger strikes, etc.

We will point out some of the campaigns that make reference to economic aspects that are currently being carried out.

- *Clean clothes*: This campaign is co-ordinated in the Spanish State by SETEM. Its objective is to make consumer men and women aware of the conditions of exploitation of millions of working men and women in the textile sector and to make a claim that all textile companies of sports goods that have their products manufactured in the South, should respect the human and labour rights of the working men and women of those countries. The campaign promotes the adoption on the part of companies of codes of conduct with effective measures of control and guaranteed by independent institutions. (www.ropalimpia.org)

- *External debt, eternal debt*: Promoted by Caritas, Justicia y Paz, Manos Unidas and many other NGOs and entities, the campaign aims at informing, making aware and mobilising public opinion about the grave problem of external debt so that it pressures government to free from the burden of external debt more than a thousand million people in the whole world. It is world-wide in character and sets out to achieve the condoning of unpayable debts of the poorest countries of the world.

- *Food manipulated genetically? No, thanks*: The aim of this campaign is to make people aware of the danger of transgenic foods, patents on life, the introduction of genetically modified organisms in nature and the necessity of social control of genetic

technologies. It has been launched by ecological entities, syndicates, consumer organisations and NGOs.

- *Education now*: Some 125 million boys and girls in the world do not go to school. One of every four adults is illiterate, and of this number 70% are women. Education is one of the fundamental means of getting out of poverty. In 1995 governments across the world committed themselves to guaranteeing universal primary education before 2015 but up to now have not taken the necessary measures. The objective of this campaign of Intermon and Oxfam is to pressure governments into fulfilling this commitment.

- *The Tobin Tax*: The Nobel Prize winner for economy, James Tobin, formulated in 1972 a very specific proposal: fixing a small tax on all monetary transactions so as to reduce their fluctuations and permit governments to recover autonomy in macroeconomic politics. In 1988 ATTAC (*Association for a Tax on Financial Transactions for Aid to Citizens*) was given birth to in France as a response to a proposal of Ignacio Ramonet in "Le Monde Diplomatique", and has currently extended to the whole world and co-ordinates the campaign in defence of the Tobin Tax as a valid instrument to fight against financial speculation which benefiting a few, does not generate riches for all.

- *Patents, at what price?* Current legislation assures exclusive rights of commercialisation during 20 years to the owners of patents of pharmaceutical products. As a result, generic products of patented medicines cannot be produced. These measures protect the economic interests of the big pharmaceutical firms and put many essential medicines beyond the reach of the poor. This campaign proposes a change in legislation and in the practices of pharmaceutical multinationals, which would prevent the interests of big pharmaceutical firms from being placed before the life of people.

3. POLITICAL AND SOCIAL MILITANCY

We live in an era in which politics is discredited and there is disenchantment with respect to participation in politics. The crisis of parties as instruments of democracy has been added to the crisis of democracy.^{iv}

Meaningful big models have fallen and we have been left only with pragmatism, utilitarianism and efficiency (economic values). New meaningful responses have appeared but often these are superficial, contradictory and egocentric.

This fragmentation and contradiction causes social links to be reduced to economic ties (production and consumption): this incites individualism, the weakening of society, and makes the defence of common interests to limit itself to the defence of corporate interests, etc.

A second consequence of this fragmentation and contradiction would be the strong division and clash between the public and private: the individual locking himself within the private sphere of the family, work and consumption. From this stance, individual materialistic values are prioritised and concepts of the common good, public morals, etc. vanish. This framework makes the co-existence of strong personal contradictions possible since one can be an aggressive and cruel businessman and at the same time a loving head of the family because the two spheres are different (though lived by the same person).

Let us add the leading role that mass communication media (MCM), economy and science have come to play in the social and political dimension. The MCM, victims of the need of making money, saturate citizens with selective news, which with difficulty is unbiased. The formative function performed earlier by political parties, syndicates, the school and family has now passed to the MCM, who shape a type of person that is saturated and non-critical.

We are living under the global dominion of the economy and the dominion of science and technology and of their logic. Both dominions are very much linked to each other since they support each other mutually. The latter dominion is more internalised than that of the economy since it forms part of our cultural and ideological substratum. Together with the logic of the economy, technology in a more silent and discreet way keeps increasing its dominion over our lives.

Our society seems "adolescent": fragmented, contradictory, in the search of immediate results, without medium and long-term vision....

1. POLITICAL PARTIES AND SYNDICATES

It is necessary to revitalise participation in *political parties and syndicates*. This must be done with the awareness of their limitations and incongruencies, with the conviction, however, that their transformation must necessarily be brought about from within. Parties and syndicates have traditionally been the instruments whereby the demands of society have been made known to the authority in power and they have afforded political formation to their members and sympathisers. Today due to very low

membership, they do not have an important social base and the dominion of the resources of the MCM has enabled the mass media communication to assume the function of political formation (or misinformation, or manipulation).

The professionalisation of politics, the remuneration and privileges enjoyed in high political posts, offer people no stimulus to abandon politics; on the contrary, make them wish to remain there perpetually. The difficulty that many experience to go back to their profession reinforces this situation. A situation which on the other hand has a repercussion on the discredit of politics and the lack of voters' confidence. Voters feel rage and impotence before politicians they consider to be corrupt and spongers; nevertheless, they know they cannot do without politicians, since politicians are the only mechanism - the lesser evil - they have to organise social life.

A proposal to revitalise participation in parties is the celebration of "primary elections" but when this was proposed it was forgotten as quickly since party cupolas realised that this would mean a loss of control over the base. Unprofessionalising politics or reducing benefits obtained in political activity so as to make it more profitable to work in one's own profession rather than in politics could be another alternative.

People inspired by the Christian faith and with different values should be encouraged to enter political parties and syndicates and to try to transform these from within and to restore the prestige of politics by giving priority to the common good and not their private benefit. It is a difficult task since once one has entered a party or a syndicate the temptations and difficulties are great, making it indispensable to be supported by a community or group that helps one to discern right from wrong.

2. ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION

It is necessary to re-consider vote abstention. Voting is a right, not an obligation, and there are people who renounce the exercise of this right to manifest their attitude of disagreement with the political system or with parties. There is also the possibility of expressing our disagreement by casting a blank vote, whereby we do not renounce exercising our right.

On the other hand, abstention is a matter of concern when it is the result of indifference or superficiality. One must understand that decisions are taken by political institutions that directly affect us all. Our passivity vis-à-vis political decisions is what permits the taking of decisions and acts we later criticise and which give us the excuse for not participating politically.

It is not only important to vote but also to read the electoral programmes, speak to candidates, inform them of our demands, and above all, exact a strict compliance of the programmes. Not voting for them in the next elections is not sufficient: we have to inform them of the motives of our discontent.

These politicians who do not satisfy us and who we have lost confidence in, take advantage of our indifference and passivity. If we complained and were strict about compliance they would be obliged to respond to the priorities of the voters since they are our representatives and depend on our vote.

3. ASSOCIATIONS

Revitalisation of the associative tissue is also important and one must participate in associations, while promoting and financing them. Associations are a classical instrument too of political participation that has lost much strength in respect to previous epochs. In the Franco era they were important instruments of political mobilisation and struggle. Later they slowly lost ground to parties and a certain social peace (or perhaps passivity) that seemed necessary to establish the recent born democracy. Either one did not know or did not want to exploit the strength and the implantation of associations with the result that they lost their leading role and social strength. It would be necessary to revitalise associations of every type in order that they recover their leading role and social implantation, as a way of overcoming the fierce individualism and mercantilism prevalent in social relations.

We can start informing ourselves and knowing about the associations that work in our town, city or area, and why not, get ourselves to collaborate in some of them whose objectives we find attractive. Perhaps we already form part of some association (the parents' school association, a students' or sports association, etc.) but do not participate actively in the same. Active participation may be a good way of starting.

4. NGO AND VOLUNTEER WORK

NGOs are taking shape as the new socio-political actors. Until recently it was nations that had the most weight in the international field. Today it is international financial institutions (IMF, WB, WCO, etc.) and multinational companies. Only big NGOs seem capable of counteracting this influence and of including topics of human rights, justice, etc. in the international agenda.

But one must separate the wheat from the chaff. After the NGO "boom", a second stage of maturity, lucidity, clairvoyance is desirable to permit the NGOs to free themselves from superficialities, mercantile and political manipulations, to clarify who is who in this sector, to free themselves from dependencies.

Superficiality dominates the approach of some NGOs who are unable to see the economic, political and social mechanisms that provoke the realities they are confronted with. This short-sightedness, at times Europe-centred, at times inefficient, is translated into superficiality at the time of defining actions and solutions.

It involves too a mistaken vision of volunteer work and of solidarity. It is something I do some hours of the week, during a period of my life, because I have time, because I need a curriculum, to make friends, etc. But it does not change my life in the least, neither my way of seeing the world, nor relating myself with others.

The contact with other realities does not raise questions in me, nor does it make me grow or change anything.v NGOs can be decisive actors in the socio-political field or can contribute to that false "solidarity" that lulls consciences into silence and avoids all

transforming commitment. It depends on how participation and commitment are focussed on in them.

At any rate, the balance is necessarily positive. Their international role is increasingly more decisive: they are important international role-performers, with capacity to influence international political agenda and create alternative political opinion.

5. GLOBALISING RESISTANCE

Seattle and Prague have signified the beginning of a new way of making known to the powerful people of the world the discontent and rage in the face of so much pain and injustice. This new way of acting raises the creation of *new alternative networks and new links of complicity* among us who wish to flee from the dominion of the economy, the disenchantment of politics and passivity. New more dynamic and agile relations, well disposed to collaboration and the spread of so many proposals that form part of the same macro-project of justice and respect, that can be concretised in so many very different ways in the local sphere.

And so it is necessary that we participate in as many platforms, international movements and campaigns as possible so that we can strengthen and increase these alternative networks and globalise resistances. We should not forget the countries of the South, which are not always taken into account, although many proposals and causes for which we are working, directly affect them.

6. EDUCATION

All educational acts are potentially transforming, but for these to be so it is necessary to create in schools channels and conditions of participation, closeness and freedom. There are certain educational ventures that should appear on the school calendar because they open students out to reality, at times at a certain risk, or because of their personalised follow-up of students, or their commitment against injustice and the struggle in favour of solidarity.

Unfortunately there are other educational ventures that promote submission and passivity in students, ventures with hierarchical authoritarian schemas, or decisions that are neither consulted nor accounted for... Fear, efficacy versus participation, or mere custom are responsible for the formation of passive, uncritical youth in certain educational centres (schools, leisure and community centres for children, play-centres, etc).

A centre where people participate gives more "work", more trouble: one settles matters more quickly with an imposition such as "it has to be like that" or "because I say so"; however, it is a poorer system. In such centres, boy- and girl- students lack mechanisms of participation in something that has a direct repercussion on themselves as is their own formation. This lack of mechanisms can also be suffered by parents, the teaching staff, boy- and girl- monitors. Student councils, parents-of-students' associations, the teaching staff, meetings of monitors, etc. are existing spaces that can serve to deepen the

participation and dialogue of all those involved in education and should be promoted at school level.

Means and conditions for greater creativity and for a true participation of boys and girls in school activities must be invented, although that could imply the addition of more difficulties to the thrilling and already difficult task of education. All educators know the long way covered and the long way still ahead...

The school should incorporate in its programmes education focussing on health, peace, diversity, solidarity, prevention of drug dependency, road safety, etc. And it should also transmit certain educational contents, instruments and procedures for study. At times this balance between what is learnt and attitudes is not easy to live by, but it is the function of the school to open doors and break down separating walls. There are families committed to their children's destiny but there are others who, at times because the labour market leaves them no option, or at times because of the simple craving to have more, or for convenience sake, have confided the education of their sons and daughters to the school and the communication media. Families should recover the responsibility of educating their children in the essential values of life: respect, solidarity, peace, etc.

We can ask ourselves in meetings of parents and educators: in what values are our children educated? In alternative values, or in the consumption of activities? What is prioritised in education: creativity or product consumption to while away time?

The importance of entities that are dedicated to the education of free time is very significant. In a society where free time is devoted to watching television and to consumption, educating to use this time in a more fruitful and community-related way is a big challenge, as we will now see.

7. LEISURE AND FREE TIME

Leisure time is also impregnated by the values of economy: the main recreational activity of many people and families is buying. To verify this one just needs to visit a department store on a Saturday evening. Consumption is no longer a necessity, it is a *type of leisure* with very specific characteristics.

Individualistic, because it is done by people alone, or, at most, with their family, where no social link is established that goes beyond the boundaries of the family unit. Passive, because it does not require any effort or activity on our part. Sterile, because it does not develop any personal or community-related capacity nor does it create anything. Immediate, because satisfaction is automatic. Other alternatives to leisure that have the same characteristics are thematic parks: *individualistic, passive, sterile and immediate*. Although they have added "advantages" (in addition to being big business): Thematic parks are ways of living "virtually". In the not so distant future we will have to face a generation that will have lived and will live more "virtually" than really (if "living virtually" can be called living). It will have seen, heard and experimented more exciting and more far-away things but all this in a "virtual" manner, that is to say, unreal, programmed and manipulated. They will not have references to real life, not even of real life at close quarters. When one lives in "virtual worlds", one only sees what one is

allowed to see, and one loses the vision of reality, its problems, the incoherent elements, the inequalities... and if one does not have a vision of reality, one cannot easily have a *critical* vision of reality.

It is necessary to abstain from these forms of leisure so little proper of human beings and one should adopt other types of attitudes for one's free time: attitudes that are creative, community-oriented, simple, active, fruitful both in family circles as well as schools, leisure centres, etc.

8. NON-VIOLENCE AND THE CULTURE OF PEACE

The option for non-violence and the construction of a culture of peace has a social and political dimension as also an important personal dimension. There are many institutions, associations and NGOs that, working from a pacifist non-militarist approach, seek non-violent solutions to conflicts by carrying out reflections, actions, campaigns, etc.

We live in a world where violence is the main mechanism of solving conflicts. This is no novelty. What is new is the capacity for destruction that violence has acquired in our day due to the technological and scientific advances that have multiplied its capacity to wound and kill.

It is necessary to control and limit this exaggerated capacity for doing harm. Amnesty International, Greenpeace, Intermón and Médicos sin Fronteras promote various disarmament campaigns. It is necessary to strengthen mechanisms and institutions that work for the pacific resolution of social and political conflicts. We are not referring here only to the United Nations, but also to other issues that are more at hand such as the pacific solution of conflicts that are produced among our neighbours, work companions, family members.

Working for a culture of peace supposes too an important *personal commitment*. How do we resolve our conflicts? It can be an interesting exercise to observe and analyse our habits, and those of people who surround us to analyse what are the mechanisms we use to resolve conflicts. Let us not forget that violence has many forms and can be physical, as well as verbal, emotional (blackmail, manipulations), economic (labour exploitation, extortion, fraud), etc.

We would like to point out some of the campaigns that are being carried out with respect to disarmament and the fiscal opposition to military expenditure.

- *Secrets that kill*: Commerce of arms is carried out in secrecy, indispensable for the transaction of operations likely to be ill considered by public opinion or which could even be banned by the legislation of the exporting country.

In Spain, exports of arms have to be approved by an Inter-ministerial Board in which are represented different ministries and whose acts are secret. Not even members of Parliament have access to them; so it is a matter that escapes political control and that of the citizens.

The objective of this campaign is to obtain greater transparency in the commerce of arms.

- *Let us eliminate mines:* There exist today more than 110 million mines set to go off in more than 64 countries. These endanger the future of those countries since they have been placed especially in supply areas, in centres of cultivation and production, in roads of communication. It is always the weakest members - little boys and girls - who suffer their consequences.

For this reason since December 1994 a campaign has been launched to obtain the total and absolute eradication of Anti-personal Mines, a campaign that obtained the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997.

- *Farewell to Arms:* The aim of the campaign for the control of light firearms is to secure greater control over the commerce and use of these weapons, preventing their illegal traffic, increasing the transparency of the transactions and reducing their demand.

There exist in the world some 500 million light firearms in the hands of guerrilla fighters, Mafias, paramilitaries, delinquents, etc., besides the millions of arms in the hands of police and security officers. They are produced in some 70 countries that maintain strict secrecy regarding their production and sales. The proliferation of weapons in the hands of different groups has increased the possibility of their being used in conflicts and confrontations.

- *Fiscal opposition:* Fiscal opposition to military expenditure is a movement of civil disobedience that involves refusal to collaborate economically in the military expenditure of Spain and refusal to comply with the laws that oblige us to contribute through taxes, in this expenditure.vi

9. COMMUNICATION MEDIA

Mass communication media (MCM) has turned out to be one of the great powers of our time. It is absolutely necessary to learn to resist its influence since it is reasonable to put in doubt the neutrality of almost all of them. We are "illiterate" in the language of the media that dominates our lives, the news (which creates opinions), advertising, entertainment (which creates values), etc. We need "schools" to teach us this language, "maps" to guide us in the darkness of mass media, and formation that permits us to understand what we are reading and seeing. The intentions of the media are not easily neutral.

As long as we do not know how to obtain this formation, or how we could do so, we can only consider the possibility of abstinence in order to detoxicate ourselves, and to consult alternative communication media and formation to know other criteria and points of view.

Abstinence presupposes having learnt to turn off at will our television and other existing screens at home (videos, video games, video consoles, Internet, etc.). It is not necessary to have the television always turned on as background sound; perhaps it can be substituted by music, the radio, or by nothing at all. It may perhaps be worthwhile to

negotiate among family members moments when there should be no screen turned on and propose other ways of sharing leisure time.vii

Using alternative information media can help us, even if in self-taught fashion, to learn this language of the media. In TV programs there are always to be found informative and documentary programs where social, political and economic matters of interest are focused on. Many of the publications turned out by NGOs, associations and other entities with a social orientation can help us to learn about other realities and other viewpoints.

4. ECCLESIAL MILITANCY

We are living through a strong contradiction between the church we have and the church that the Gospel makes us desire. We do not always understand some declarations, gestures, words... Far appears at times the Council where the Church was defined as the "sign (sacrament) of communion", a communion that was supposed to be the criterion of credibility. There is a contradiction between those who try to walk towards that programme and those that (without denying it expressly) prefer to do away with it, hoping that it dies of inanition.

The ecclesial model and many "theological" explanations are not valid because they do not respond to the concerns, values, desires and capabilities of people. At the present time authority is understood differently, Christians have much more information and desire to participate.

There exist too in the Church attitudes lacking in dialogue, closed attitudes with prejudices that do not favour a meeting together. Dominance is also to be found in many members of the Church.

Conflict inspires fear: it is seen as something negative and destructive and is avoided at any cost. This is a sign of insecurity and a lack of maturity. Conflict is inevitable in any human relation and, if handled well, can result in personal growth and the deepening of love. What can be negative is not conflict but our reaction to it. If in all human relations there is conflict, should this not exist too in the Church, a living community?

The Church has historically wielded much power, and this has provoked, and provokes, many problems and complications, many temptations that separate us from the Gospel. Some long for that "powerful Christianity" so alien to the Beatitudes.

This is our ecclesial panorama in which we have to live and share our Faith. It requires too a *militancy*, some small constant but transforming work.

1. NEW SPIRITUALITY

We need a *globalised spirituality*, a more than ever Catholic-universal point of view. Never before have we been able to verify with so much clarity how problems are world-wide and how we all form part of the mechanisms that generate these problems. Our church is universal by definition: it is global since its inception two thousand years ago. And our perspective has to be this.

A global perspective, as we have shown at the beginning, supposes seeing the world from the majorities that suffer, from the 5,000 million people for whom life is an aspiration and a struggle, not even a right or a possibility.

Before this impotence that dominates us, the idea that nothing can be done because everything is so complicated, because the powerful are very powerful whereas we are very small, we have to make a bid for hope. If Utopias exist, they have not ended. We believe in the impossible: Jesus rose from the dead. If we believe in this we can also believe that the world, and the Church, can rise from the dead, that they are already doing so, slowly, as we can see in so many signs of hope. It is possible to do things and it is worthwhile doing them.

And thanks to the fact that we are working to reduce more and more these incoherences and the profound conviction we have that God is with us in this work, we are able to bear both the often-felt feelings of incoherence and a bad conscience as also all our contradictions and the contradictions of the world.

This work, small but loyal and coherent, is what we understand by militancy. Jesus whom we follow deserves a better Church. We speak of a spirituality of *resistance* because this is what it is, to resist with perseverance and hope, starting from the small, which gets bigger when the more we are who bid for it.

2. "INTRA-ECCLESIAL" ECUMENISM

Vis-à-vis the dualisation of the Church it is necessary to work not to break intra-ecclesial bonds. One could talk of an "intra-ecclesial" ecumenism. Within the Church there exists a plurality of charismas, of states, people, opinions, that shapes a great number of groups, associations, points of view, etc. There exists a big plurality that is really much wealth.

Not always is plurality seen as something positive: it frightens insecure people who fear a contrast of opinions. When one is more or less sure of one's opinions and options, one does not fear difference, pooling in of ideas, sharing and learning.

Vis-à-vis this possible dualisation of the Church, it is necessary to look for what unites us, and this is none other than Jesus of Nazareth, who we confess as the Incarnation of God, who rose from the dead and whose full meaning cannot be reached by just one explanation or attitude.

It is necessary to re-do the deteriorated or broken bonds, starting from the premise that plurality is positive because it enriches us all and permits us to live in freedom and brotherhood.

And it is necessary too to strengthen the ties among groups and associations, among people that form the church, doing all this with dialogue, respect and deep mutual love.

3. ENDING "THEOLOGICAL AND SPIRITUAL BLACKMAIL"

How many times we have been silenced by the words: this is a "theological question" that cannot be discussed! Or we are subtly asked if we are not good Christians because we have had doubts about something!

In situations such as these, we have been unable to do anything and lowering our heads we have kept quiet because our scant knowledge of theology and our spiritual insecurity did not permit us to doubt what they were telling us. This is what we refer to here as theological and spiritual blackmail.

Theological and spiritual blackmail is also using theological arguments to put a stop on matters that in reality have a historical, sociological or political origin. The question of the Ordination of women is an evident example.

Few people believe now that there are theological reasons that impede this, since Jesus in whom we believe, was clearly in favour of the dignification, respect and equality of women.

Similar examples are the designation of bishops and the structure of the Church (centralist, monarchical and authoritarian), and so many other moral issues...

We need much formation and solid, courageous, living communities who could give us the security we need not to fall a prey to this "blackmail". And we need brave theologians (lay people, if possible) who can bring forward alternative approaches with solid arguments.

We need the courage of a Teresa of Avila not to give in to this blackmail that she too had to bear. It goes without saying that this would mean assuming that we would face conflict and even be exposed to rejection.

We need strong and courageous communities who are well disposed to receiving and supporting these theologians.

4. REVISING THE LANGUAGE

Changes in the language could help to change realities. Certain words perpetuate schemas of inequality.

Why is it said that certain very specific Christians are "consecrated"? Are we not all so by baptism?

Why is it said that certain other Christians live more "radically" the instructions of Jesus? If being radical is being well rooted, who can say which Christians are more radical, more rooted? Who can see and judge this?

"Laicity" - the quality that defines laity - to put another example, is not the charisma of a group of people in the Church but is a characteristic of the *whole* Church. In fact, it is central, all-important, in a faith that is, like ours, an incarnated faith. The whole Church has to be "lay", in the sense of "incarnated in the world". One cannot speak of lay people as second-degree Christians because in reality they are the only ones who really live the specificity of Christianity: the incarnation in the world. (It could be pointed out that there are many priests, religious and some bishops that are more "lay" than some lay people, and some of the latter are more profoundly "clerical" than the former. It is not the habit that makes the monk but his life).

Let us avoid words that evaluate and judge before analysing... The problem of language at times is that it is not understood or does not communicate. This occurs especially in the liturgy. If language is the medium of communication, why is it converted into an end in itself and why does the fear exist that if such and such a word is not pronounced, the celebration or sign is not valid? Is this not magic?

5. THEOLOGICAL FORMATION

One should favour the access of lay people to theological formation: if only the clergy can have access to theological studies, theology will always be "clergy-centred". Study plans, timings, possibilities of access have to be revised. Why is it that in many theological institutes one is allowed to study only pastoral and not dogmatic specialities? Is it because they are the only places which offer evening timings which we, the laity, who have also to earn our living can adapt to? And why is it that in many seminaries associated to faculties, women are not admitted as students?

One has to advance much more towards the normalisation of theological studies, integrated in civil faculties. This would suppose a loss of power and control over the formation that is offered, something that is not welcome to those who fear criticism and discrepancy but this would lead to a healthy normalisation of theological knowledge and a pluralism and wealth that would compensate any risk.

Until such time when theology is integrated in civil facilities, places and possibilities of formation in theological institutes should grow enabling all Christians to be equipped with the necessary instruments to live their faith with maturity.

Theology is not only a university subject but is above all the explanation of the faith which the believing community practises. Without fears and complexes, all of us are called upon to make theology. The end-place of theology should not be the university but the *community*.

6. "NEW" FORMS OF PROTEST AND RESISTANCE

Very active people in social and political life, who participate in manifestations, meetings, collection of signatures, sit-ins, etc. turn quite passive in what concerns the ecclesial sphere. This is one of the consequences of that "blackmail" that we have been talking about before: the renunciation to express ourselves.

Pius XII said that a society without public opinion was a sick society, and this is also valid for the Church. Is it anti-evangelical to have an ecclesial strike for example? Or a manifestation? Or a collection of signatures? These are classical forms of protest and expression in society, though they may seem "new" in the ecclesial sphere. Why should we not use in the Church these same mechanisms that we already use in civil society?

Probably we have participated in such sort of actions with respect to social, political and economic topics, why should we not do the same in matters of the Church?

We shall put forward a few examples of these *new forms of protest*, at the risk of forgetting some interesting proposals, so that we could show that it is possible to do something similar and that (fortunately) there are many who are acting in this way.

- *We are the Church*: It started in Austria as a collection of signatures to consider the necessity of revising some aspects of the church, and it rapidly extended into forming finally a movement of reflection and opinion on a world-wide scale. It proposes the construction of a Church that is fraternal, poor and by the side of the poor according to the example of Jesus and where everybody (men, women, the laity, clergy, etc.) enjoy equal dignity and the right of expression and decision. Attention should be drawn, nevertheless, to the care to be taken in the formation of its members and the maintenance of rigorous argumentation.
- *The Association of Women in the Church*: It is formed by people who, from different options of life and professions feel the strong desire and are sensitive to the situation of women in the Church and society, where a lack of coherence is noted between reality and the Gospel. It is a group of reflection and action that works to obtain a change in the negative attitude the Church has towards women, as also to be able to participate in the Church in an adult and responsible way.
- In many places a claim is made for a *greater participation of the local Church in the election of its bishops*. In this way more suitable elections could be achieved. Already some specific initiatives have been taken as the survey that was promoted by the magazine *Foc Nou* among its readers to gather the opinions of Christians in Catalonia to the changes that were foreseen in various Catalan Episcopal seats. The readers were consulted about the profile desired of the candidate bishop, the priorities he should attend to, and the proposal of names of people who could be good candidates.
- There already exist in many places certain *publications* with a "non-official" ecclesial vocation, in which courageous alternative information can be found, information that not only informs or forms but that also heartens and encourages. We could mention, as examples, *Alandar*, *Iglesia Viva*, *Selecciones de Teología*, *El Ciervo*, *El Pregó*, *Foc Nou*, etc.

EPILOGUE

Anyone of the specific proposals that we have put forward can potentially transform reality but none of these is exempt from criticism or limitations. We do not claim to affirm from a stance of impossible purism that they are perfect. But this does not mean that they are not useful, because despite their limitations, they permit us to advance in this proposal of a dissident solidarity. The primitive Church used to say of itself: "if we say that we have no sin, we are liars"^{viii}. The problem does not lie so much there as in whether it fights or not for things that are more evangelical and more in consonance with the Kingdom of God than the current state of affairs.

These problems, these limitations or incoherences can be regarded as insurmountable barriers or as challenges and clues that point out possibilities of improvement and deeper penetration. Things in real life are complex and rarely perfect. But this should not dishearten us; rather it should oblige us to learn, to reflect, to enrich ourselves mutually, working together with plurality in mind.

Words are nothing until they take on life. These words are proposals of life, of a full and human life to which we humbly and hopefully aspire to. They are an invitation to walk, to experiment, and to reflect. They are an invitation to *live*, because life is what ultimately matters: the life we lead, the life we share, the life we multiply.

And like life, these proposals do not end here; we do not claim to have said everything on the matter: more is certainly left for us to know, to learn, to invent.

A final warning: *criticism, militancy, transformation do not make sense if they are not lived with love, tenderness and good humour*. We cannot be militant just anyhow; in any way or at any price. We have to be so in a very specific style. The end does not justify the means. The means have to be coherent with the end, that is the Kingdom of God. To militate and resist, yes, but with good humour, tenderness, hope and a loyal and profound love.

Some interesting addresses...

You can find them in the link page of "Foro Ignacio Ellacuría".
web.forodigital.es/usuarios/foro.i.ellacuria/enlaces.htm

NOTES

i Writing in the Spanish language brings us face to face with the problem of gender. Using only the masculine gender irritates women readers, and rightly so, since we do not feel ourselves represented by a language that refers to just one-half of humanity. Using the option of the Spanish "un/a" (masc./fem.) becomes a little tiring. And it is not always possible to find neutral words in Spanish that include both male and female. It is a difficult problem to solve in places where it is necessary to harmonise inclusive language, i.e. including women as well as men, with a certain easy flow of the text.

ii The booklet of CiJ nº 103 (J. Mària, *La Globalización*) can help us to understand better these new globalised contexts.

iii We can also find more information about just commerce in the extra booklet of CiJ nº 105, in the article of C. Llobet and E. Cantos about this topic. Also at the following addresses of Internet: www.comerciojusto.com - www.e-comerciojusto.org

iv For a deeper study of this topic we propose the reading of the booklet of CiJ nº 56, *Ante una democracia de baja intensidad*, of D. Oller.

v Some very interesting reflections about the role of volunteer workers can be found in the booklet of CiJ nº 68 of P. Coduras, *Voluntarios*; and in nº 79 of E. Falcón, *Dimensiones políticas del voluntariado*.

vi Further information can be obtained in the local centres of Justice and Peace. For the topic of fiscal objection we refer the reader to booklet nº 69: *¿No hay nada que hacer?*

vii For those who wish to go deeper into this question, we refer the reader to booklet nº 69 *¿No hay nada que hacer?* as the reflection on television and the use that can be made of it is still perfectly valid.

viii "If we affirm that we are without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (First Letter of St. John, Ch. 1, verse 8).