

Peripheral Magazine - Region VIII - Concepcion – Chile - 03/90

I. Biographical antecedents.

Mario Luis rodriguez Cobo was born on the 6th January, 1938 in Mendoza (Argentina). His father was involved with the wine production of the area. His mother, a music teacher, had been born in Bilbao (Spain). An older sister, fine art teacher, and a brother, publicity agent in TV, made up his immediate family, until his marriage, 15 years ago, to Ana Luisa Cremaschi Alsina. His wife, an outstanding ballerina of the Chilean Ballet, had been in her country, a favourite pupil of Dore Hoyer and the master Uthoff. She was also a descendent of a family dedicated to agriculture. His family now consists of his wife and two children, Alejandro (10), and Federico (7).

After his primary and secondary education in a religious school of his native province, he went on to manage a factory producing tinned oil, and later on he organised and directed a company that produced alcohol for medical uses in hospitals and pharmacies. His activities at present are limited to growing grapes.

II. Published books.

"The Look Within" (1972), "The Internal Landscape" (1981), and "The Human Landscape" (1988). These three books have been published together by Editorial Planeta in Chile and Argentina, and Editorial Plaza y Janes of Spain, under the name "Humanise The Earth" (1989). Also in 1989, Plaza y Janes has published "Guided Experiences". At present "Contributions to Thought" is in print at Editorial Planeta (two essays: "Psychology of the Image", and "Historiological Discussions"). Since 1972, his books have been translated and published in the most important languages and they have circulated in the five continents.

1. How do you explain that after many years there persists a sort of "black legend" with respect to you and Siloism? Why is your voice and thinking silenced in most of the countries media?

These are two questions. In relation to the first one, I can answer that this sort of "black legend" starts at the end of the 60s in a moment in which the rebellion of youth was present in the whole world. You probably remember those hippies and the guerrillas' starts in those times. These were new phenomena with a rapid "polluting" force that was making the alarms of the "the establishment" ring. This is the way our rising movement was seen at that time: precisely as a mixture of hippy and guerilla, without forgetting a quota of "artificial paradises", that is, drug-addiction and mysticism, which were also lesser variants of the times. The first currents have shown their failure in the world and nobody concerns himself with accusing us of such things... it would be as ridiculous as to accuse us of being Jacobites or monarchists. In terms of the world of the addicts and mysticism, the thing is very different. Today drugs are a very real phenomenon, very badly fought against, by the way. With respect to "mysticism", it's growth in all latitudes does not escape anybody's attention. But this is not necessary for me to expand, since I have already dealt with it in a conference called "Religiousness in the Present World", 6th June '86, in the Casa Suiza of Buenos Aires.

Well then, what has been left today, of the intellectual drug-addicts of yesteryear, who were entangled with the thoughts of Watson, Huxley, and the beat generation? What remains of the "mystics" who traveled to Katmandu and followed whatever guru within reach? The remains of the era of the hippy and the guerilla, of addiction and intellectual "mysticism" (the survivors), today are shameful executives or simple employees who interpret their previous activities as simple "errors of youth". They have been good boys, and they have been forgiven by the understanding "straight-thinkers". Soon the same position will be extended to the survivors of the Marxist shipwreck. But as far as we are concerned, many people do not forgive us; one, for not having been any part of that, in spite of their efforts to classify us there; two, for our continuing growth and development in the whole world, in front of the total failure of the others who started from the same starting line (the 60s); and three, because we do not experience our past as an "error of youth" but on the contrary regard it with profound pride, like the one who feels he's been trampled by a stampede, by injustice, and is then vindicated by the historical process. Because when I as speaking about a "stampede" I'm not only referring to the slander of the media, motivated by base interests, I am stressing more serious things, like jail and deportations, such as occurred in Chile and Argentina, in the latter we also had our dead... and of course we will never betray our past, that common past of construction and struggle.

The second part of your question is directed to the reason why our voice is silenced at present. I will answer this in connection with the previous explanations. Do you believe that space can be given to you to say: "Gentlemen, we are not the accused, but you are; we demand explanations for all the abuses you have committed. Answer us, why have you slandered us, jailed us, deported us and assassinated us? Show just one

trial record, of one judicial process where the smallest crime committed by us can be found... Let's see the gutter press, those pamphlets, those books, (some of them made into compulsory material for schools), with which they intend to poison the minds of the new generations who want to know about us. Let's see that public debate we are still waiting for, in the whole media, where we participate equally with you."

Today, as it is very difficult to associate us with the failure of the generation of the 60s, they rather speak of something as vague and paranoid as our "intentions". It seems that our "intentions" are those of a demonic sect, launched toward world domination, something that Fascism has attributed in the past to Sinarquia, Zionism, and Masonry. In reality, they are attacking today a force that questions a system of domination which is in their hands and certainly not in ours.

2. What's your opinion with respect to what is called "the end of ideologies"? How do you understand the phenomenon and emergence, in different points of the planet, of neo-liberal thinking?

About this point, I have made some considerations, in the book will tell you; what has ended is a type of ideology, not ideologies in general, nor an ideology, precisely like that of the neo-liberal, which with complete bad faith, pretends not to be an ideology, but rather, reality itself. If by saying the end of ideologies, it is meant, the end of Marxism, we agree, but nobody can be so ignorant to pretend that Marxism is or has been the only ideology. The neo-liberals have their ideology, and we have ours. Moreover, we vindicate the transforming value of ideology, understanding it as a coherent system of thought, which gives direction and objective to actions. But rigorously the neo-liberals are children of pragmatism and, in fact, consider themselves as pragmatists. Today they have dignified that word and that attitude which in other times was called "opportunism". Today, there are no longer opportunists, but pragmatists. A pragmatist is a man who says he has "his feet on the ground" and he deals with "reality". A man who advises; do what is more convenient at each junctuer, a juncturalist in sum. In this way, they can justify any betrayal as long as results are obtained. If someone answers that this is not what he was planning to do half an hour ago, he will say, that things have changed (which is true) and that the most convenient action has to be done (which is not true); to put "convenience" at a universal level, when in reality it is a particular convenience. But such a primitive way of doing and thinking has a short range because could it not be that others will also tell this gentleman-example-of-pragmatism, the same things that he says? And with this pseudo-philosophy we reach a world where everybody knives everybody else because it is the most convenient for particular interests. The pragmatist will treat any value, any cause, any proposal for solidarity, as simple "ideology".

The fact that neo-liberalism advances in this historical moment does not ensure its success. We need to understand that neo-liberalism is a refurbished old liberalism from the stage of savage capitalism corresponding to the industrial revolution. Today things have changed, in fact, those who formed the nation states today realise that they are too small for the action of their capital. Because of that, today they start to dismantle the nation State in favor of example. Nationalists in all places react against this advance and they entrench themselves in their particular localisms in an anti-historical dialectic. As the world advances irreversibly towards unification, the neo-liberals have embraced that tendency, and they appear as the historical winners. It's a bit what has happened with technology; today they don't take into account the long process which has led to the revolutions in computers, communications, genetics, nuclear science etc. They give us to understand that they have produced them, and many people associate technological and economical development with neo-liberalism. In reality, the neo-liberals have had the virtue of knowing where to invest their capital, and because of that virtue of being good investors, they appear as the forefront of the historical process. You will understand that the history of humanity is not, exactly, the history of investors. This taking of the radish by the leaves may lead us to very amusing interpretations of history.

3. Do you believe a real lowering of tension at world level is possible?

Absolutely, especially since Perestroika.

4. In your vision of future, do you see possible, the triumph of liberty over the present authoritarian determinisms? Could the collapse of "real socialisms" be a sign in this direction?

I think that the aggiornamiento of authoritarianisms is happening. The world changes and so do they. Through "formal democracies" and the control of the media, old authoritarianisms today tell us that we are living in free societies. People believe it intellectually but do not feel it that way. This division between the prefabricated belief about freedom, and the personal experience that something is belief about freedom, and the personal experience that something is wrong clearly announces great social unrest, of which the East has been a preview. Of course, in all formal democracies, they don't kill you in the street because of your ideas (moreover, ideologies have been sufficiently disqualified); nor do they prevent you from standing on a soap box in a corner

to explain your disagreement with the management of public affairs. If you have to accept that you live in freedom because they don't kill you, because you can drink Coca-Cola, and then stand on a soap-box to make propaganda, the idea of freedom is left rather reduced.

5. How do you see the present Latin American reality and the ever-present feeling of advancing towards integration?

I think that at present, the multinationals do not oppose regional integration, so that tendency is a fact. We also coincide in the direction of integration and also we greet a process of growing globalization. But what we are arguing with is the social sign that in the end will prevail in that globalization and in particular in the integration of our Latin America.

6. What is the position and message of the Movement for the present Chilean reality? What is the role of political organizes like the Greens and the Humanist Party?

The Movement defends all ideological and political positions that allow the Human being individually and as a social and historical being, to develop fully towards freedom. In that sense the Movement does not distinguish between people who participate in different political and religious currents. In fact people from all walks of life and ideologies feel equally members of the Movement and they discrimination and authoritarianism. The Movement is a philosophy of life, a sensitivity and an optimistic aspiration towards a better world. In that sense it can inform little about the particular situations in each country.

In terms of political organisms like the ones you mentioned in your question. I will tell you that although they recognize their philosophical inspiration in the Movement they are the ones who should pay specific attention to the realities of the countries where they act. In that range of ideas I do not see much difference with what happens in internationals like those of the Christian Democrats, Liberals, Communists, and Social Democrats, because as you probably know the Greens as well as the Humanists have formed their own internationals. Well, they have succeeded now in the assembly and in this democratizing process. We are eager to see how they can contribute now to the step from a formal democracy to a real democracy and this will be done if they know how to listen and to obey those they obtain their mandate from that is the people who put them in the functions that they occupy today.

7. What is the project you propose for humanity?

It would be an excess-on my part to speak of "humanity". Rather I limit myself to contribute a point of view with respect of the well being we are so lacking at present. I am referring to fraternity... one of the three principles that inspired the French Revolution and which has encouraged the most positive of the great religions: human brotherhood. Because if we talk about equality and freedom without that marvelous human solidarity (that internal potency that makes the truest actions end in another and not in me), such freedom and such equality will be an empty fore within a cold judicial system and a cold economic and social technology. This I am saying about solidarity is not just words, it is a life style and a personal and social practice.

8. Is your project political, scientific, ideological, mystical, esoteric, etc?

In the first place I should clarify that is not just my project but rather it is a common project we have been constructing amongst thousands and thousands of people over the whole world. And the human activities are so many and so varied that necessarily every things that happens to the human being in all fields becomes involved and of interest. Paraphrasing others "nothing of what is human is alien to us". But going back to what we said before, basically the Movement, more that an organisation is a point of view about the human being, a feeling and a life style. It is something integral where particular activities are linked coherently like the beads of a necklace. For us the coherence between thinking, feeling and acting, and everything else, is important. If it does not correspond to this coherence (which we try to deepen and improve day by day giving a good account of our many faults), if it does not correspond to that coherence. I say, it is mere words or vulgar pragmatism, or even worse, but if you want a short answer I will tell you that our project is an integral project for the development of the human being not considered as an abstraction but rather in his daily existence. It is a new way of personal and relational life.

9. What is the Movement and what are its main aims for humanity?

If we had not spoken about the previous themes I should respond to you in an almost scholarly way in the following terms: "the Movement is defined as the organisation that interprets the needs of the human being and produces the means to advance from the field of determinism to the field of freedom. It works for personal development as a function of social transformation. It struggles for the humanization of the earth as non-violent

in its methodology of action. It develops its activities through different channels of expression and specificity coinciding with its methodology and basic objectives. In this sense the Movement stimulates the creation of specific structures in the social, cultural and political fields with an original proliferation of forms of action and points of view." But we have seen other things other elements which have to do with the feeling and activity of the Movement.

Today we seem to have avoided the possibility of a nuclear confrontation as we feared in the '70s and which was our main preoccupation. But are there not other dangers? Is there not growing pollution and ecological imbalance? Is there not a fast and crushing impoverishment in Latin America and Africa? Is there not an alarming psychosocial and individual disconnection that express themselves in a number of forms that today would be tiring to list but which we all in our own way know? Is there not a growing conflict between centrifugal localisms and regionalisation? And if those factors accelerate will it be possible to control them or will they be already out of control? No doubt those are problems that surpass the Movement in its capacity of providing solutions, but they are an urgent that it can only make its effort and contribution, clarifying its point of view about these realities.

Apart from clarifying about the serious problems that today are suffered by humanity what else can we do other than inviting everybody to participate in our Movement to convert it into a great lever? Because it is not the case that we are criticized because we have power of decision, that power will be only in the hands of the people if the people decide to support the points of view that we present, and if they do it accepting that it is essential to organise themselves in the direction we are proposing. If, instead, they simply share our point of view, thinking of a sort of organizational spontaneity, the probabilities of putting into practice these ideas are reduced to the minimum.

We are not well-intentioned people with illusions; we know the difficulties that surround our undertaking. But also, each one of us understands that the valid action is that one carried out with coherence independently of results, which are most of the time unforeseeable as history teaches us. Let us see, in a hypothetical way some situations that today do not appear to very probable. What would happen if the army became divided in China or in the USSR and a civil war were to happen in those places. Do you think that the nuclear conflict could not arise suddenly as a new possibility within those powers that necessarily would drag half the planet with them? What would happen with the EEC if a unified Germany decided to modify the terms of the movement of capital and investment towards the East instead of Western Europe? Would the UK maintain itself for long within such a structure? If this were to happen before 1992, of course it would result in a different picture than if it were to happen later in time. What could happen with a disintegration of Yugoslavia? Would not all the unstable equilibrium of the Balkans be compromised? Would not the borders that arose after the disassembly of the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the century be reviewed? And if that were the case where would such revision end? Possibly as far as Austria? And if Afghanistan and some republics of the USSR were become independent, would they not be transformed in a short time into Islamic Republics and may be fundamentalist? In all the aforementioned cases would things be left like they are now in Europe or would new and unstable phenomena appear, very different from those foreseeable at present? Not to speak of the transformations that could happen in the political systems of the Arab world. Not to speak of social unrest in Latin America and, for other reasons apparently), in the rich western countries, so stable and launched towards "eternal progress", and an "end of the history" of conflict.

Improvising with these speculations about the future, I am not trying to paint an apocalyptic future but rather saying something else; is it not true that the acceleration of the historical tempo surprises and surpasses? Is it not true that a couple of years ago, in general, these rapid changes were not expected? Then, prepare yourself, for it will come whether good or bad because also good things may seem horrible for those who are educated in a scheme of fixed values as if they were non-historical. We are saying; people are not adapted nor is their nervous system prepared to assimilate the speed of change. This will bring a lot of misfortune and much tragedy and the generational abyss will be enormous. But, let us not dramatize. Let us simply say that we have to prepare ourselves personally and socially for the change the planet is already in and we already feel the first soft tremors of the coming earthquake... for good or for bad. The movement is concerned with confronting this change positively and with preparing itself to be at the vanguard.

10. What role does religion fulfill and what is the position of the Movement with respect to it?

As we have explained, the Movement does not distinguish between believers and non-believers. But in these unstable times, will people seek refuge in a growing superstition or will they channel their seek refuge in a growing superstition or will they channel their religious feeling in a fraternal and positive direction? Will cults become more radical, opposing each other furiously, as happened in the past, or will they open themselves to give room to the best in the human being? Yes, the development of the religious phenomenon is also a theme of

study of the Movement as long as it affects individuals and peoples, and it has a very clear idea about this; the religious feeling is good if it contributes to overcome pain and suffering, it is good if it contributes to life, it is good if it gives faith to science in its conquests to elevate humanity and it is good if it listens attentively to god through the voice of the suffering people.

11. What are the sources of Siloism?

Philosophically speaking, Siloism owes a lot to phenomenology as a method of thinking and to the existential currents, in general, because of the stress given to the primacy of existence over essence; in the realization of the primacy of human life over any theory or interpretation in which the human being appears in all its dignity as historical agent and not simply as a receiver, or epiphenomenon, or reflection of objective conditions. Also, it is felt to be a contribution to universal thinking and not exclusively of a nearby current in geographical and historical terms. Siloism does not feel Western or Eastern in its thinking, it rather experiences that it touches all human roots in all latitudes and is touched and enriched by them.

12. What is your vision of the progress achieved by humanity?

It is a rather tragic vision in terms of what has happened up until here and very optimistic about the future possibilities from now onwards. Think just about the advances of medicine and project them forward and I think that you will share our optimism, but, attention, the destiny of Man is played in the field of freedom and choice. We believe in human freedom, and therefore in the possibility of choosing badly for the future. We work to make that choice go in the line of what has made all progress possible; the struggle against pain and suffering.

13. In your view, what are the historical milestones reached by Man and where is his development taking him?

I believe that there are numerous milestones, think just about spoken and later written language. Think about the domestication of vegetables and animals; think about the systematization of scientific thinking; think about the silent action of hundreds of generations, of the anonymous people who with their work and effort have made possible the production of gigantic illumination that dazzle us today in all the fields of knowledge.

In terms of where development is taking the human being, I only think it is taking him towards a very big and cosmic destiny, above all with kindness, "conceived" for him before the creation of the world, but that future is in his hands, only in his hands...