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7. GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

GLOBAL SOLIDARITY IN ARIZMENDIARRIETA

“The man or society that does not give up its own progress and want to make it compatible with a human regime without whips and violence, has to accept the limitations derived from the presence and demands of others. This means it has to accept solidarity as a fundamental aspect and, therefore, has to condition its promotion and aspirations to those that are also felt by others”.

The Arizmendiarieta project conceived **solidarity beyond the limits of the actual company**. Cooperative members cannot rest on their laurels, or limit their outlook and interests to the narrow field of their cooperative. Arizmendiarieta spoke about different levels of solidarity, among which we have **international solidarity**.

In Arizmendiarieta’s opinion, the **goals of the cooperative movement** go beyond cooperative companies’ satisfaction with good results:

“No-one hides the fact that the simple constitution and operation of cooperative companies cannot constitute the goal of those who have a mature awareness of the problems in the world of work. For this reason, aside from more or less satisfactory results of our respective companies, the cooperative members should continue being non-conformists while the whole vast socio-economic world cannot manage to be ordered in accordance with the assumptions of the dignity of workers and their work budgets, a great shame of incurring in non-solidarity and inexcusable myopia. The satisfied ones will not build the new world, the humane, fair social order, nor will it be given to us without risk and common effort of our own”.

At the time, Arizmendiarieta already sensed that the great difference was not between classes, but rather between rich and poor nations, North and south. Humanity is a family that is so disastrously governed, Arizmendiarieta would say, that whilst one son has enough to gorge himself with food and still have left over, another two go hungry. In the current structuring of international trade, these differences tend not to be reduced but rather to increase. The global reality, in this sense, is much more extreme and much more of an interpellator than in the times when Arizmendiarieta formulated his thoughts.

Remaining on the sidelines of this reality nowadays is loaded with reasons for ethical indignation, in a globalised world it could certify the death of the sensitivity and social commitment that has historically characterized the cooperative action.

Arizmendiarieta's words take on a special resonance in recent times:

"A decent man should feel embarrassed to be and live as a rich man in a world where 2,000 million men are badly fed".

"We must spread the idea that a healthy man can only accepted progress at a standard of living that is shared by all men".

Arizmendiarieta is aware that the problem reaches such dimensions that even the best will appear impotent against it. However, he emphasizes that it is not inopportune or utopian to outline these questions. On the contrary, in his opinion it is necessary to outline these questions, keeping awareness awake, to perceive the problem to its full extent, and **not forgetting the goals of the cooperative spirit**. It is important to set the way: only through the passion of universal solidarity will they be able to start creating the necessary channels.

GLOBALISATION OF THE PERSPECTIVE

At a historical time in which the term "globalisation" has been established in the explanatory key of the current world situation, Arizmendiarieta's diagnosis gains greater relevance. In times of the globalisation of the economy, a business project that aspires to be something more than a device for the production of wealth in a more or less democratic way, and which also has, besides its merely productive aspirations, an ethical-moral mission of solidarity, is continually forced to **re-think this concept starting from the new key factors of the world situation**. It is necessary to formulate in new theoretical and practical terms the important matter of social justice, a matter that constitutes the nervous element of Arizmendiarieta's thought and the experience derived from this thought. At the same time as the frameworks of economic actions are internationalised, the field of solidarity-orientated action should also be enlarged.

From a historical perspective two classic models of solidarity could be pointed out. The **first solidarity**, characteristic of the first stage of the industrial and fundamentally working-class era, was established among a majority of equals excluded from the benefits of the system against a minority of privileged ones. The idea was to make the workers see that "joining together makes us stronger", and that their situation of marginalization could and should be transformed by means of collective action. It was the weak ones (majority) who showed their solidarity to each other against the strong ones (minority). It is in this logic where the creation of our experience is located. A **second solidarity** has been conformed by the so-called Welfare State. In this new historical situation, workers overcome the conditions of poverty and reach a considerable level

of income and rights, as a result of this, solidarity loses its main foundation, which was the common experience of injustice from which to come out of together. An attempt is made to resolve the situation of the weak ones (that are no longer a majority in the first world) maintaining the situation of the strong ones in the basic aspect (that are no longer minority in the first world). In the Welfare State the problem of social justice seems to be reduced to a matter of an economic and administrative nature (how to continue growing and how to distribute the profits of the growth), in which the political and moral implication of people is evacuated. Something similar to this last point could be happening today in our cooperative experience.

At this time in history we seem to be witnessing, in an increasingly clearer way, the fundamental fact in any reading on the state of human (in)dignity, and the (non) distribution of power and wealth that characterizes it: the brutal and growing division of the citizens of the world into two strongly differentiated areas, the North of the planet, which is rich and wasteful, and the impoverished South that is stricken by despair (all of this with great nuances and all the complexity that this type of situations bear). Given the magnitude of the problem, on too many occasions this reality appears to be unavoidable, a fatality that by not responding to anybody's will pleases itself. However, it is necessary to set up against this reading, which is perhaps somewhat self-interested, another fairer and more solidarity-orientated view that looks towards the current configuration of international economic relations, the international division of work, and the structural causes of human misery. This world is a human construction, not an unsolvable fatality, and only from this view will we be able to practice conscious, mature solidarity.

At the present time, in a historical phase in which the progressive conformation of a global society is confirmed, the Arizmendiarieta experience cannot remain on the sidelines of the reflection that, from different scientific, ethical-religious or political sectors, is being made on the need to formulate a new solidarity. There are basically two new conditions of this solidarity. On the one hand, the great discovery of the decade of the seventies was the existence of *physical limits* to growth and, in a close relationship with the previous one, the discovery of *shortage* is made: in a limited world there are not enough resources for the whole planet to be a privileged "Northern district". In the light of the discovery of these new conditions all projects that include the objective of solidarity in their priorities should reflect on the new situation. Developed societies, and us as a part of them, should think about the possibility that nowadays solidarity forces us to give up enjoying some possibilities. What the term solidarity now insinuates is to resolve the situation of the weak ones (the overwhelming majority of humanity) against some interests of the strong ones (us) as regards their development model and their ways of life.

The idea is not for us to resolve the situation of world poverty. That is certainly not the task of our cooperative experience. However, leaving this matter aside would not be characteristic of a project that understands solidarity as something consubstantial to itself and as a motivational reference in its daily process of development.

THE GROWING POWER OF THE HUMAN RACE

At the present time, the human being possesses a technical, scientific and technological capacity, which is now more than ever, capable of doing best and the worst. The power and knowledge that have been reached by the human race make it possible nowadays to create enough wealth to satisfy the material needs of all the inhabitants on the planet. However, hunger and the consequences of the lack of appropriate food are still the first cause of death in the world, when an important minority lives in the era of excess. The power that humans have reached is such that they have reached the possibility and capacity of destroying the conditions needed for our existence as race. The nuclear era has marked a landmark in human history, since the capacity of control over our environment also implies the possibility of destroying like never before. This fact is one of the greatest historical transformations as regards the place the human race occupies in the world.

In many people's opinion, the process of destruction is already in progress as regards the **physical degradation** of the planet (global warming, deforestation, desertification, etc.), and **human degradation** (growing precariousness of the living conditions an overwhelming human majority, the extension of famines, etc.).

Arizmendiarieta wrote the following: "we live in a century of gigantic progresses and, at the same time, of the greatest human tragedies". He diagnosed a spectacular advance in technology and science, which would not be proportionally accompanied by the moral and intellectual aspect. Therefore, he stated "the vital problem of our society consists of whether we have enough strength to subordinate the technical civilization to the spiritual and moral forces". In other words, the challenge consists of establishing the direction towards achieving a **balance between the economic-instrumental rationality**, raised to a guiding principle of the modern capitalist industrial civilization, and an **ethical project**, directed at the gradual establishing of a more humane order. The current phase of capitalism, called neo-liberalism, is in fact characterized by the contrary tendency: the reinforcement and absolute dominion of the inherent rational calculation to the capitalist worldview, and the negation of all ethical projects.

The absence of an ethical project in a historical phase in which the magnificent human capacity of destruction exceeds unsuspected limits, is at its least disturbing.

THE PARADIGM OF COOPERATION IN A GLOBALISED WORLD

The globalisation of the economy also demands a new conceptualisation of solidarity in global terms, and this new conceptualisation converges with

the idea of a community formed by the group of humans. All individualistic humanism can remain in the most contradictory paradox if it is not located in this perspective and if it does not review its practice consequently. The growth of certain communities and small human environments, cannot lead to the misery of others, especially if the others make up the great majority of the world's population.

Therefore, the paradigm of the Cooperation needs to be extended with more and more force, from a global perspective, in the organization of the economic, social and political life of the human community. Becoming aware of this new reality is not a simple task, but in the future, this key factor may hold one of the ideas-force and one of the elements of meaning of our Experience.

The world's problems reach such a dimension and complexity that it paralyses the best transforming desires of any social agent. However, it is true that little or nothing can be done from the defeatist assumption of the actual littleness against the large world dynamics and phenomenon. Therefore, instead we should also articulate our efforts in the direction of universal solidarity, without grandiloquent pretences and in so far as we possibly can. Only in this way will we make our path. In fact, it was this vital attitude that made the current Mondragón Cooperative Experience possible.

EXPLORING NEW FORMULAS IN INTERNATIONAL EXPANSION

In these times of economic globalisation and necessary international expansion, the commitment to the cooperative idea requires us to seriously explore the possibilities to practice this expansion in the cooperative regime. In the world there are an infinity of cooperative experiences. In the western world in particular there are strong cooperative networks in different productive areas, in the area of distribution, in finances, etc. All cooperatives, including ours, should perhaps examine more closely how they can be joined across the national frontiers. Would it not be a good idea for the producers of the same goods in different parts of the world to thoroughly research how they could join together to gain more control of the processing of their products without leaving this part of the global economy in the hands of an increasingly smaller number of multinational companies? Would it not be a good idea for the cooperative financial institutions to stop and think more about how an international cooperative financial system could be created? To analyse and to try all the possibilities that exist in this terrain is an unavoidable obligation of today's cooperative members, as they are aware of the difficulties that exist, with regard to the extreme diversity in the legislation on cooperatives, for example.

The idea is to evaluate whether we feel committed to the expansion of the cooperative movement at an international level, or we share the widespread belief that the future belongs exclusively to the capitalist economy. 700 million people on this planet practice cooperativism, i.e. are

members of cooperatives. It is necessary to get to know this cooperative reality in depth and to establish ties that lead to mutual knowledge in order to **explore the possibilities of working in a group**. However, there is more. There are also social community networks, universities and educational realities, non-government bodies, experiences of self-managed community development, and a long list of experiences committed to other ways of seeing and doing, which conform a real base for the expansion of forms of social economy. The fascinating task of exploring these possibilities is in our hands. More specifically, we can **explore the possibilities of working jointly with these realities when we create economic activities abroad**.

On the other hand, some business organizations and NGOs have already started to look for formulas of collaboration in the cooperation, with paradigmatic examples in Germany and Sweden. In these activities the companies carry out different functions: they act as suppliers of goods and services, and they provide human, technical or financial resources to the cooperation actions to be developed. This could constitute a new and fascinating line of work that dimensions the nature and social function of the company to its full extent and wealth. It is a line of action that perfectly connects with the idiosyncrasy of the cooperative company.

SOME KEY POINTS FOR COOPERATION IN THE THIRD WORLD

Leaving the topic of business expansion to one side, we will now centre on cooperation for the development of the countries in the so-called Third World. It is evident that the globalisation of the perspective of cooperation for the development of impoverished countries is a dimension that goes way beyond charity as small price to pay. It has to do with the **location of the actual meaning** of the Cooperative Experience, with its foundations and the regeneration of the ethical impulse that created it. Therefore, the idea is to activate the imagination and creativity to develop this whole dimension of cooperative solidarity.

On the other hand, a rigorous view of reality leads us to rule out that the problem is for "poor people from the third world to be able be as developed as we are", by giving them some money and models to imitate. This is an incorrect perspective. It is has been widely demonstrated that the Western development model is unviable on a global scale, that it is humanly and globally untenable. From all the world ethical environments there are outcries on the **urgency of seeing new development models** in the light of the absurdity of the course towards nowhere (or towards destruction and growing inequality) that our model of growth implies. It is from this perspective that it is necessary to focus the rich possibilities that cooperation with nations in the Third World offers.

The great global task we all have, the new humanly and globally sustainable model that we must contribute to creating, is as far away from them as it is from us, and perhaps, in some aspects, it is much

nearer to them. From this awareness conscience, the "paternalist" paradigm of the cooperation changes, and it becomes much more creative and more motivational. We must cooperate by giving and learning, in the search for more humane models. We must start from a recognition and a change of paradigm: the awareness that in some aspects we are further away than them from the humane development model that we have to set for the future and cooperation should be built with humility, as an opportunity to learn and change in a two-way direction.

TOWARDS AN NEW VIA OF COOPERATION

The moral responsibility that our societies in the North of the planet have to channel part of our resources to the South is undeniable, not as a mere exercise of charity, but as a demand of justice and of the moral debt incurred with these nations.

The increasingly popular cooperation model, which is channelled via institutions and NGOs, still has its dangers: promoting cooperation with only one direction (helpers and the helped); creating new dependences, not taking advantage or inhibiting the creative and self-managing potential of the nations; to appease the consciences of the 'drawers' without really changing their conceptions of life and their development model; not really creating exchange flows that cause changes in the two parties, being limited to subsidizing projects from a distance.

And even with these dangers, cooperation through the financing of projects is indispensable and important. However, there is a more genuine path (although hardly developed) of cooperation: the one that has an experience to share. The cooperation that has an interesting experience of human development to share, that is interested in knowing the experiences of the impoverished nations, and is interested in establishing a **real flow of cooperation**, teaching and learning in order to progress in this exchange towards new more humane models.

Therefore, a new path of cooperation stands out: to dedicate resources to exchange programmes for experiences, messages and knowledge. Programmes that treat the Third World communities as receiver-producers of experiences, in their full dignity, and which place the same emphasis on transmitting experiences to them as in steeping our own society (or the cooperative bodies) in the realities and teachings of these communities.

The Arizmendiarieta cooperatives of MCC are in a privileged position to promote this type of cooperation. We have a social experience with very important contributions for community development, and we also have a lot to reflect on and to **learn from the spirit of the multiple community experiences** of the Third World nations, in the light of the challenge implied by the regeneration and revitalization of our own cooperative humanist project towards the future (which so needs new horizons and the fuelling of its community spirit).

OUR OWN OPPORTUNITY: EXCHANGE AROUND A KEY POINT

There is more and more insistence from the most experienced NGOs that an important key factor to come out of the current abyss of injustice resides in the capacity of organization, self-management and illumination of their own development models by the main characters, the communities and the Third World nations.

In fact, and even though this is not the image that is most seen of these nations, the Third World is effectively full of a great wealth of community experiences, self-management experiences and humble but real and effective attempts to illuminate their own models of sustainable development adapted to their own community. Experiences from which, surprisingly, we can learn many things.

And perhaps in this last point, in the willingness to learn from them we find one of the key factors that will lead us to new paradigms of development based on more humane values. This attitude is a requirement for a real shared way out, a true cooperation, where both collaboration and change have a two-way direction. We are talking about an entire principle of cooperation, by globalising the perspective: inter-cooperation.

The Arizmendiarieta cooperative network has a lot to share on this key factor: self-managed community development, Arizmendiarieta's central intuition, which fits into many aspects with the challenges of Third World small communities. It is a new and exciting challenge: to guide part of our contribution to the development of the Third World through exchange and education programmes open to the community experiences of impoverished and indigenous nations. These programmes, besides the contribution that is made to these nations, have the virtue of opening new flows and horizons to our cooperative and educational experience.

An example of the realization of global solidarity is the "Exchange Programme for Experiences of Community Development" promoted by Mundukide. It consists of channelling a new path of cooperation: the creation of exchange scholarships through which leaders and people belonging to developing community realities in the Third World come to Mondragón to complete a specific programme of activities in a two-way direction: to transmit experiences and receive them. The objective consists, on the one hand, of transmitting to the scholarship holders and their communities the experience of the Arizmendiarieta cooperative companies and the community structures created around the cooperative movement; and on the other hand, of learning by the university and cooperative community about the teachings of the experience of community development and the spirit transmitted by the main characters in Third

World communities. This is an incipient beginning in a field of work that has great and interesting potentialities.

Questions for debate:

- What importance should we give at this time from the Cooperative Experience to global solidarity? In what broad terms could we sum up this level of importance?
- How can we advance in relations with world cooperativism?
- How can we explore the possibilities of working jointly with experiences (cooperative, community, educational, etc.) rooted where it is interesting to create external economic activities?
- What type of initiatives could be started to channel this solidarity? In what sense could the companies and cooperative institutions be implied in the global solidarity? And what about the members of cooperatives?
- How should we focus the MCC's Foreign "Cooperative Diffusion" environment? Should a change of direction be made in this environment for our international projection towards community experiences of the so-called Third World?
- What role can MU play in it? Could we start to profile MU as a university that is also open to the educational needs of Third World developing community experiences?