

The Principle of Participation and the Renewal of Society

I

A tremendous metamorphosis through which humanity today is passing — a true turning point of history in which the agro-pastoral civilization transforms itself into an industrial civilization — is changing fundamentally the conditions under which men gain their livelihood. These changes are reflected in all of man's life: all of his dimensions are thereby affected. This chain of transformations is today customarily referred to as the industrial revolution.

Roots of the industrial revolution reach back into the Middle Ages, and its development was closely linked with that of a new social class, the bourgeoisie. In the spiritual sphere, the industrial revolution was conditioned, first, by a reaction to the existing theological and philosophical conceptions. On the theological plane, the spiritual authority of the Church was undermined through the Reformation principle of «free» interpretation of the Scriptures (the principle of «sola scriptura»), whereby was expressed the drive toward an absolute autonomy, and therefore toward unlimited freedom of man. On the philosophical plane, the evolution took the form of a new conception of science. Science began to be conceived of as power, as the *novum organon* (Francis Bacon) which is supposed to render man «maitre et possesseur de la nature» (Descartes). And the way toward the creation of this new science was the critique of cognition.

In this critique of cognition there plays a role a certain conception of man — a conception not always clear, but rather an implicit presupposition — of man as a self-sufficient individual who is enclosed into himself: thence Descartes' problem, how can man know the exterior world? Man is here presented as a monad, «without windows» (Leibnitz).

This presupposition of a perfect autonomy of man, which merges into a conception of man as a self-sufficient individual, leads in politics to a new concept of the state. The state cannot exist out of «God's will» and out of «the sociable inclination of man», but only out of the free *will* of man. This will man expresses through the *social contract* (Rousseau), and through it he pursues above all the securing of his *own* freedom, which otherwise would be threatened by his animalistic nature. Without the state he would live in a permanent struggle of all against all (Hobbes). The purpose of this state is the protection of the «rights» of the individual (the collective is understood as a function of the individual), and this means that the state is only a «guarantor» of certain «rules of the game» within the limits of which that game is freely to be played. From the state should emerge automatically — through some kind of assumed «pre-ordered» harmony (the *harmonia preestabilitata* of Leibnitz) — the well-being of all. This conception of the state attempts to bring together two things that cannot be amalgamated: a «supervisory» function (*stato carabinieri* — repressive state) with a liberating function (the liberal state). The Marxist critique points out this contradiction when it uncovers, under the guise of the «pan-humanism» of the liberal state, its class character. The harsh consequences of this ideological and political framework manifest themselves most convulsively in the economic sphere. Two basic «rules of the game» that the liberal state is to guarantee are (1) the law of supply and demand (to which is now subordinated not only the physical product but also human labor, and thereby man himself), and (2) the law of free competition (which is only a certain manifestation of the law of the strongest).

Modern (Cartesian) science, which reduced human rationality to mathematical rationality, attained through this simplification considerable success. The simplification in fact means an enhanced view of the whole and that enhanced view further means precisely what modern science pursues — domination or mastery over nature. The consequence of this reduction is a set of forces which manifest themselves in the most varied sectors of human activity; it is the powerful development of *technology* which revolutionizes old methods of production.

The law of supply and demand and the law of free competition together with technology break down old social orders and make

them conform to their own image. The old social relations and ties are being broken because they are reduced to a relation of supply and demand and to a relation of satisfaction of needs. The bourgeois society is becoming a «system of needs» (Hegel).

What is happening as a consequence of these developments with men and with society? The mechanistic mentality which creates an image of the world corresponding to itself (the world as an immense rational mechanism in which there is no place for «miracles»), manifests itself with particular destructiveness in the sphere of human work and production. Indeed, it reaches many times higher levels of productivity but at the cost of mechanization of human work. This means that the process of production which initially was unified is broken down by mechanization into a number of simple activities which subsequently is handed over to machines. Man is used as a filling of spaces between machines: thus human labor becomes dehumanized and man is reduced to a mere machine. In fact man is no longer a man (alienation), because what is most important in him is now his capability to function as a machine so that any other, non-mechanical aspect of man, his creativity, his «soul», loses its meaning. And thus man is either completely mechanized — he becomes a robot — or, especially in view of a later gradual reduction of working hours, he is split between a machine at work and a user of free time. And the free time, or leisure, then very often serves only as a further suppression of his soul which has now become useless for work.

The law of supply and demand, which was set free through the abolition of various feudal constraints, and whose free action reduces all human and social relations to a «system of needs» (hence, for example, disaggregation of the family or that of a village), attains even human work and transforms it into a commodity. Man is forced to sell his work. And the price of this work is of course determined exclusively by the law of supply and demand; therefore, under the conditions that have prevailed in most countries for most of the time since the industrial revolution, the price of work can be forced down to the subsistence minimum. Work which ought to be the fulfillment of man's life becomes a commodity to be traded, so that man in a certain sense is selling himself.

An increased supply of labor makes possible the reducing of wages, and thereby also an accelerated accumulation of capital, so that it can be said that capital is created at the expense of the

pauperization of the broad masses. Large numbers of farmers, craftsmen and subjects of the feudal system which were until then incorporated organically into feudal society are now torn out and pulled into newly developing centers of industrial production. The uprooted and atomized men are amalgamated in these centers into a human mass (massification and proletarianization), which distinguishes itself sharply from the owners of the means of production. Society splits itself into social classes among which there develops an unbridgeable gap. The society which was supposed to guarantee the freedom of all has instead become a society of class warfare.

From what we have said it follows that the alienation in which man is living is not only the consequence of exploitation. The alienation of man flows not only from the fact that he is deprived of the «surplus value» of his work. The roots of alienation are far deeper, and they are the consequence of all these false simplifications which stand at the foundations of the industrial society: man as an absolutely autonomous and therefore absolutely self-sufficient individual, man as an entirely self-enclosed monad, knowledge conceived as power, creation of the mathematized and mechanized picture of the world, dehumanization of work and its reduction to the form of a commodity, the possibility of tremendous exploitation, all are such roots.

It is true that ever since this revolution started to yield its evil fruits a reaction to them was not missing. The history of *socialism* is a proof of it. But socialism remains predominantly a victim of the same presuppositions as those on which liberalism was built. Only some secondary and derived principles are changed. While for liberalism the collective (state) is exclusively at the service of the individual, the individual now is understood primarily as the function of the collective (thence the danger of totalitarianism); whereas liberalism blindly believes in the favorable effects of free competitions for forces, socialism believes in central planning by the state (therefrom the danger of killing centralism); whereas for liberalism property is sacred and untouchable, for socialism it is the key to all evil (thence the naive belief in the automatic remedy through expropriation); etc. Therefore, the Marx-Engels prescription especially in its Marxist-Leninist form (communism) never succeeded in overcoming the alienation of men; it could only add to it through an ideological oppression.

II

The industrial revolution as a socio-economic phenomenon can be understood in the following manner: an enormous increase in productivity stemming from the use of capital in conjunction with new technology makes it impossible, through forces of competition, for those who do not have capital, to work as independent producers. This is so because prices of goods can decline to levels at which producers unassisted by capital and new technology absolutely cannot survive. Thereby a new class is formed, the proletariat, which must for its survival sell its services of labor to a capitalist entrepreneur. But because, especially in the early days of liberal capitalism, the size of the proletariat is far in excess of the demand for its work, the wage rate is depressed, again through competition, to a subsistence minimum¹. And that is the explanation of pauperization.

By definition, the man who lives at a subsistence minimum cannot accumulate capital and, as we have shown already, he cannot work independently either. And thus his belonging to the proletariat class becomes permanent almost without exception for the working man and most often for his children. For generations they are constrained to the living minimum, the variable of adjustment for a family being the number of children doomed to die of starvation or malnutrition; and no savings or accumulation can occur because normal parents will never save and accumulate while seeing their children die because of it.

For the same reasons, the man who has capital, that is, the entrepreneur-capitalist, becomes an absolute ruler of the world of production — and, ultimately and more subtly, of the political world too — because it is only he who can provide jobs and thus makes possible survival. It is also he alone who exercises total control over the enterprise and thereby in fact degrades the working man to a subhuman condition in which his functions of responsible moral agent, creator, and manager essentially disappear. The working man remains thus only with his grim role and destiny of a mere factor of production.

¹ The theory of value of Ricardo and Marx, who wrote in those days, is based on this notion of a subsistence wage rate.

This subhuman state in its crude form combined with subsistence income is prevalent even to this day for some one-half of the world's population. And in a less crude form where for a variety of reasons it has been lifted above the subsistence minimum, though still under capital control, ownership and domination, it is prevalent to this day for just about all of the other half. This is so because the virulent forces of early capitalism became so entrenched and so much a part of our culture that even after the working man could lift himself up above the subsistence minimum he continued taking for granted control and domination by capital.

In the days of early capitalism the conditions described became alarming to many utopian reformers, to Marx and the socialist movement begun by him, as well as to Christian critics - both individual men and the official Church.

Neglecting utopian attempts which failed to have any serious direct impact on later evolution, it is possible to say that the socialist-Marxist direction put emphasis on the non-human problem of capital ownership. It sought the remedy in the transfer of that ownership from the capitalist to the state. That is, the Marxists brought about the creation of state capitalism where the state controls, directs, and gains profits from the production process². Thus while improving some aspects of the condition of the working man, they worsened others and, above all, failed to remedy the most fundamental: the control, exploitation and domination of the working man by those not belonging to the working collective.

By contrast, the teaching proposed by the more spiritually minded Church, as is evident from the encyclical letter *Rerum Novarum*, was always defending the humanist principle in seeking remedies to the deplorable conditions. Here we can distinguish three directions:

- 1) The creation of Christian labor unions, parallel to other labor unions already in existence, mostly socialist-oriented.
- 2) Association between entrepreneur-capitalists on the one side and workers on the other (corporativism); and
- 3) The participation of workers and employees in the management and profits of enterprises.

² These profits, the difference between price and production costs, were as a rule enormous in the early stages of the industrial revolution, on account of subsistence wages; this fact led Marx and others to the theories of surplus value and exploitation.

The first direction, historically, can be said to have had a partial success. Indeed, we find today in some countries, especially in Europe and Latin America, Christian labor unions. The second fundamentally did not succeed owing to a gulf (perhaps the scriptural gulf between Lazarus and the rich man?) which arose between the two major classes. The third orientation, which for our discussion is by far the most important, has also appeared in recent times to be the most promising of the three for the further evolution of social systems. It is also interesting to note that *that* orientation is the only one whose origins can be said to be explicitly Christian. Even though the participatory orientation is recognized explicitly by the Church in the encyclical letter *Quadragesimo Anno* (1939), the father of the idea of a production cooperative, i. e., of full participation in management and income, is a French Catholic; Buchez, born at the end of the 18th century and writing early in the 19th³.

The participatory system of self-management in its fullest form puts emphasis on the position of man and not of capital. Thereby it distinguishes itself fundamentally from both capitalist systems, that based on private ownership and that based on state ownership (i. e., socialist). Thereby also the participatory system is the only one in harmony with the principle of the Church that man stands at the center of things. (State for man, not man for State).

The participatory system and economic organization rests on what we may term the *fundamental participatory principle*, which can be expressed as follows: «The right to control, manage, and reap the fruits of labor is vested exclusively in those who take part in a specific productive activity (workshop, factory, farm or other) *because* they take part in it as human beings, and not because they participate in ownership of the assets used in their activity. But capital, whoever may be its owner, must be remunerated contractually for its productive services, at an adequate, economically meaningful price».

This principle is more far-reaching than the formulations in *Quadragesimo Anno* and later Church documents, where a full right of ownership of the means of productions is recognized simultaneously

³ Cf. GEORGES LEFRANCE, *Histoire des Doctrines Sociales dans l'Europe Contemporaine*. (Paris, 1966) pp. 42-49.

with the right of workers to participate in management and profit, with the legitimacy of the labor contract. The principle of participation as expressed here does not deny the principle of private ownership, but takes primacy over it. Where the means of production are used by their owner, or where no one works with them, all rights of private ownership hold. But where a group of men jointly uses such means of production (in factory, farm, or elsewhere) — as if the living were to enter into the inanimate — the participatory principle of that which is living takes primacy over that which is inanimate, that is, private ownership of physical assets⁴, and it is these men who acquire the right to govern and derive fruits from their activity.

The world is progressing in the direction of participation and the paralysis of capital domination which we have inherited from the days of early capitalism must cease: proof of it can be seen in the evolution of both human aspirations and actuality in many parts of the world. An early recognition of the principle of participation by the Church in its full form could serve as a light revealing to the world the aim and the worth of this evolutionary process.

The element we have emphasized in the above definition on the participatory principle, namely «because they take part in an activity... as human beings» is of considerable importance. In the past, quite frequently production cooperatives died because participation rested more in the common ownership of capital than in a common work. The practical solution to such a danger consists in a complete liberation of the working collective from the influence of ownership. This may be achieved by funding the cooperative through borrowed, and not at all collectively-owned capital. This does not preclude that voluntary savings deposits of individual members be used as partial funding of the participatory enterprise. This liberation can be compared on a higher plane to that liberation of man called for by Scripture when it teaches us that it is impossible to serve at the same time «*God and mammon*»; only here the two masters are «man and mammon».

We may now ask the fundamental question: how may the participatory principle, and the social teachings of the Church

⁴ As the soul given by God to an inanimate body takes primacy over that body.

in general be translated into the reality of our world? With continuing and ever-increasing socialization and increasing size and technical complexity of productive processes and organizations, it has become impossible for an individual Christian, even with the best will in the world, to realize in practice on his own many social teachings of the Church and in particular the teaching regarding participation. From this follows a fundamental conclusion for our times: In order to guarantee the fulfillment of its social teaching, the Church cannot satisfy itself with merely preaching its social doctrine. It must also act and/or help to create appropriate institutions such as could transform the teaching into reality. The institutions of the world, giant and multinational corporations in particular who are the carriers of the materialist philosophy and practice, have reached such fantastic dimensions and power that no social body falling short of these dimensions can hope to stop their onslaught.

III

In this sense, the introduction of the full participatory principle in all its fullness and the resolution of the conflict between two principles (those of participation and private ownership of means of production) necessarily calls for an institution created by the Church. The nature of this institution could perhaps best be described by the term «order-movement». The concept of *movement* is used here to modify the traditional notion of an *order* in the direction of greater universality and greater dynamism. All that follows is intended as a further explanation and clarification of what we mean by this «order movement» (for simplicity, hereafter we shall call it simply «movement»).

A historical analogy to this movement, if not its actual earlier foretelling, is the selection of seven deacons, among them St. Stephen, by the twelve Apostles; their mission was to look after the distribution of bread to (Greek and other) widows so that the Twelve could dully devote themselves to the preaching of the Word. In the movement that we speak about, the socio-economic ministration in today's world according to the teaching of the Church is an analogy to the distribution of bread in the early Church. The

second significant analogy is to the global and integral character of the diaconate of the Seven within the Church, resembling the necessary character of the movement. These analogies and the notion of revitalization of the mission of the diaconate might justify the term «movement of St. Stephen» if the whole matter were to become reality one day.

We can now proceed to a systematic description of the proposed movement, and do so under the following five headings:

- 1) The general definition of the movement
- 2) Membership in the movement
- 3) The rule of the movement
- 4) Its economic mission and organization
- 5) Non-economic and supra-economic meaning of the movement

1. *The general definition of the movement*

The movement is an association of men who are convinced about the truth of the general principle of participation (as defined above), and who want to direct their lives by it and bring it to fulfillment in performing their professions.

The organizational form of the movement is dual: it is composed of a universal mother-body and local individual, autonomous and self-governing groups. The mission of these groups is to perform economic and other functions, as will be defined and explained in the following sections. The principal reason for the duality is the separation of ownership from control of economic activities, and the prevention of inordinate income from capital. It is through this duality that productive groups and organizations can be formed, based on the pure principle of participation, deriving from work and not from ownership.

The mother organization provides capital resources for which (as for any other non-human productive resource) the working groups must pay an appropriate economic price. These payments, or returns — with the exception of its own minimal current expenses — the mother organization must use in their entirety to further the expansion and development of existing or newly-created working groups. The mother organization also has many other functions, secular and non-secular, as explained in the following sections.

2. *Membership*

The membership in the movement can briefly be characterized as follows: The movement is perfectly open to all who accept its definition and its rule (see below) through an act of free will. They may be Catholics, Christians of other denominations, believers of other faiths — and even those without beliefs. They may be lay or clerical. Belonging to the movement begins by an act of free will, and is ended through voluntary departure or through exclusion, in case of an evident and serious incompatibility with the movement. The children of families who are members of the movement are *de facto* members until their maturity, at which time it is up to their free decision whether to remain member or not.

In a firm of the movement producing goods or services, there are members of the movement, referred to as the working group of the movement, and there may be non-members of the movement, that is, members of the participatory firm who enjoy in all respects (including the right to become members of the movement) the same rights as the working group.

3. *The Rule*

It is not appropriate to discuss or to suggest in any degree of detail the rule of a movement whose basic philosophy is participation and self-determination. That rule must also emerge from the inner will of the members. But perhaps it is permissible to suggest a few possible key characteristics.

Besides the principle of participation, which must be the basis and the first rule of the movement, it is possible to distinguish between (1) the rule for all, and (2) the rule for Catholics (or perhaps in an ecumenical spirit, for all Christians?). The second of course would be concerned above all with prayer and other religious aspects. A symbolic act unifying the whole movement could be the Washing of Feet — given to us by Christ in the Scripture and yet perhaps neglected. This symbolic act would mean humility and service to one's neighbor for all members of the movement, and in addition love and devotion to the words of Christ for those who believe.

Further, the rule for the whole movement would have to include in some way (1) a reasonable poverty, (2) a reasonable obedience (to the will of the community), and (3) a good (moral and honest) life, for the believers as defined by the Church, and for the others collectively defined as a basic norm by the whole movement.

4. *Economic meaning and organization of the movement*

The essence of the economic meaning and the organization of the movement can be explained through the Biblical parable of the augmentation of the talents. More precisely, the mother organization receives an endowment (receives talents), which it continuously makes available to the working groups, who work with these talents and in return pay the mother organization for their use. The mother organization uses the thus augmented talents for further expansion of existing and new working groups and enterprises. And thus the augmentation and thereby the possibility of growth of the movement continues without end.

The endowment of the talents, that is, the basic fund, which the mother organization does not owe to any man, are derived from several different sources. An important source are the donations of those who join the movement. Others might be donations from the property of the Church, donations *in natura* by owners and entrepreneurs who accept the idea of the movement as true, and donations of members based on the rule of reasonable poverty (of course, these last-mentioned resources would also have to be used for direct social aid to the most needy).

At their request, the mother organization also performs for the working groups and enterprises of the movement many other functions which they themselves could not carry out satisfactorily. This is an application of the principle of subsidiarity within the movement. Among these activities belong technical and organizational consulting, representation of the working groups to the outside world, legal services, et cetera.

The membership of the enterprise consists of both members and non-members of the movement, and both groups are perfectly equal to each other, especially in their role as self-managers and in their common reaping of the fruits of their work. It is important

to remember here that the actual disposable incomes of the members may be lower than those of the nonmembers, on grounds of the rule of reasonable poverty. It is equally important to recall that membership in the movement can be only a question of one's own will and decision.

The creation of enterprises and working groups is performed in several different ways and stemming from several different types of motivations. The simplest is taking over existing firms, either through a donation (or bequest) of existing successful enterprises, or through taking over enterprises approaching or in liquidation, where otherwise workers or employees would be tossed out onto the pavement. Further, creation of new firms can be initiated through a request to the mother organization from a group of men in a certain trade, at the request of a national or local government which sees the need of developing a certain type of production, or, alternatively, of promoting employment. Still another alternative is that the mother organization itself, of its own will, initiates the creation of a firm. But from the practical point of view, and given the experience that we have with the participatory solution, the most significant source of new firms can be expected — as in the case of bees swarming — to be creation by already existing firms. The catalyst role of the mother organization is very significant here, because it provides the material resources, and thus the creation of new firms requires from the working groups only their *human* initiative, knowledge and willpower, and *not* their material resources. In this sense the principle of duality between the mother organization and the working groups again reveals itself to be truly humanist: the birth of new groups proceeds from an idea and not (as so often is the case with the large capitalist corporations) from material excess (from mammon)⁵.

⁵ It is interesting to note here that many of the participatory firms that exist (e. g., a good portion of the plywood industry in the United States) were born in this latter way, and most of them then survived and became successful. This proves the enormous capability of survival of participatory firms in crises and difficult times. As for the former, there are grounds to believe that once the movement got under way, this source of growth could be quite important. For example, in Germany today, even without the inspiration of such a movement, we find dedicated entrepreneurs who for lack of heirs or other reasons are seeking a formula which would permit them to divest themselves of their property while preserving its social utility in production.

Regarding the organization structures within the firms, the working groups, the mother organization, or the movement as a whole, it is not possible to say anything very precise, because, being fully participatory, these bodies must themselves democratically define all structures, relations, rights, et cetera. Of course, if the movement were actually to be created, its founders would have to prepare provisional statutes, rules and a constitution which then could be changed subsequently within the already living movement.

5. *Non-economic and supra-economic meaning of the movement*

Besides its immediate socio-economic mission — that is, the carrying out of the social doctrine of the Church — the movement would fulfill many other objectives, mostly objectives dear to the Church. First, through the eradication and alleviation of the worst forms of poverty in the world, the movement would till the ground for spreading the Word of the Gospel, and directly assist in that work.

Through the existential security that the movement would provide, it would be possible to liberate many members from a never-ending chase after riches, and thus prevent the loss of many souls, in the sense of the parable about the sower. To the man who in his basic nature needs to conform and imitate, the movement would also give the possibility and the strength of conforming to what is good, and the help to avoid the many snares which surround him on all sides in modern affluent societies.

Moreover, the atmosphere within families of the movement and within the movement in general would certainly prepare children better for lives of service to their fellow man, and also for vocations in the service of the Church, so necessary for its life.

In a similar sense, the material and moral security created by the movement would buttress the teaching of the Church in the respect for human life expressed in the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. The Church would give its faithful not only a doctrine, but also a dignified possibility to apply it by securing and promoting the material conditions for a healthy flourishing of human life. The earnestness of the Church's commitment to reverence for birth, and to the right to a decent life for every person, would be more amply demonstrated.

Today's world and especially the vast majority of the young find themselves in a state of aimlessness. The movement could offer to the young a good aim, fulfillment, hope, and sense of life, and it could bring many to the faith.

Through its openness to all, the movement would also support the ecumenical work of the Church, and the Church's harmony and reconciliation with at least some socialist movements. Indeed, the idea of the movement in its secular dimensions concords perfectly with the ideals of many socialists. In both contexts, it is also important to realize the simple fact that often more can be accomplished by working together — as suggested by the idea of the movement — than by sitting around tables and engaging in theological or ideological debates. The practiced good life and love of one's neighbor, the work together of both those who believe and those who do not, could certainly contribute to the finding of faith by others.

JAROSLAV VANEK

KAREL SKALICKY

Resumo**O princípio de participação
e a renovação da sociedade**

I

A humanidade atravessa presentemente um período de transformações profundas, cujos reflexos se fazem sentir em todas as dimensões da vida humana. E é no contexto intelectual e político desta chamada revolução industrial que surge pela primeira vez o conceito dum Estado liberal, reunindo em si dois princípios irreconciliáveis: uma função de «supervisão» (Estado repressivo) com uma função libertadora. A contradição aqui existente e o carácter classista do «pan-humanismo» liberal foram claramente desmascarados pela crítica marxista. Nomeadamente no campo económico fez-se notar que o estado liberal tem por objectivo garantir duas leis: a da oferta e procura (à qual se subordina não só o produto como também a mão-de-obra, e por isso mesmo o próprio homem), e a de livre concorrência (uma variante da lei do mais forte).

Estas duas leis, juntamente com o desenvolvimento da tecnologia, que revoluciona os antigos métodos de produção, estão em vias de transformar a sociedade burguesa numa «sociedade de necessidades» (Hegel). O homem, porém, vê-se reduzido cada vez mais a uma peça de máquina, tornando-se mais importante nele não a sua criatividade, a sua «alma», mas a sua capacidade de funcionar como um instrumento. Por outro lado, o trabalho, que deveria representar a realização da vida humana, transformou-se em mercadoria a negociar, de forma que o homem é, até certo ponto, obrigado a vender-se a si próprio. Entretanto, nos centros de produção, os trabalhadores, desenraizados dos seus meios e transformados em massa humana, passam a distinguir-se claramente dos donos dos meios de produção. A sociedade que se pretendia garantisse a liberdade de todos tornou-se afinal em sociedade marcada pela luta de classes.

Contudo, na raiz desta alienação do homem não está somente a impossibilidade de aceder à mais-valia que do fruto do seu trabalho resulta, estão-no, antes de mais, todas as falsas simplificações que formam os alicerces da sociedade industrial: a compreensão do homem como ser totalmente autónomo e portanto totalmente auto-suficiente, o homem como mónada, o conhecimento entendido como poder, uma imagem matemática e mecanizada do mundo, a desumanização do trabalho e a sua redução a uma mercadoria, e a possibilidade aberta a uma vasta exploração.

É verdade que a par dos frutos malévolos desta revolução industrial houve sempre um esforço de libertação. É testemunha disso a história do

socialismo. No entanto, nas suas formas actuais, o socialismo permanece uma vítima das mesmas pressuposições que estiveram na raiz do liberalismo, e não evita os perigos do totalitarismo, dum centralismo mortífero e duma certa crença ingénua na expropriação como remédio automático para essa suposta origem de todo o mal que é a propriedade privada.

II

No contexto do liberalismo, o homem que possui o capital tornou-se o senhor do mundo da produção — e, por isso, e de forma mais subtil, também do mundo político — pois só ele podia fornecer emprego tornando assim possível a sobrevivência. Também só ele exercia o controlo sobre a empresa, reduzindo assim o trabalhador a uma condição sub-humana em que as suas funções de agente moral responsável, criador e gestor, praticamente deixaram de existir.

A orientação socialista-marxista não colocou, contudo, o acento da sua crítica no problema propriamente humano, mas na questão da posse do capital. E, por isso, dos seus esforços só resultou o capitalismo de estado que, embora melhorando alguns aspectos da condição do trabalhador, piorou outros e, acima de tudo, não foi capaz de remediar o fundamental: o controlo, exploração e dominação exercidos sobre o trabalhador por aqueles que não pertencem à colectividade de trabalho.

A Igreja, porém, mais preocupada com a dimensão espiritual, como transparece da encíclica *Rerum Novarum*, ao tentar enfrentar as condições deploráveis, defendeu sempre o princípio humanista. Na sua actuação podemos distinguir três orientações:

1. A criação de sindicatos cristãos.
2. A associação de empresários e trabalhadores (corporativismo); e
3. A participação de trabalhadores e empregados na gestão e nos lucros das empresas.

A primeira destas orientações pode ser considerada como tendo sido, historicamente, em parte bem sucedida, verificando-se hoje a existência de sindicatos cristãos nalguns países. A segunda fracassou devido à distância abissal que separava as duas classes principais. A terceira, porém, é para nós de longe a mais importante e tem-se revelado nestes últimos tempos como, das três, a mais promissora no sentido de uma evolução dos sistemas sociais. Entretanto é interessante notar que esta orientação é a única cujas origens podem ser consideradas explicitamente cristãs. O pai da ideia duma cooperativa de produção, ou seja de participação total na gestão e nos lucros, foi um católico francês, Buchez, nascido nos finais do séc. XVIII e escrevendo no início do séc. XIX.

Aquilo que caracteriza o sistema participativo de auto-gestão, na sua forma mais plena, é o colocar o acento no homem e não no capital. Por isso este sistema é o único que está de harmonia com o princípio da Igreja de que o homem se situa no centro da criação (o Estado para o homem, não o homem para o Estado).

Este sistema participativo e a sua organização económica assentam sobre aquilo a que poderíamos chamar o *princípio fundamental de participação*, ou seja: «O direito de controlar, gerir, e recolher os frutos do trabalho pertence exclusivamente àqueles que participam numa actividade produtiva determinada, precisamente *porque* nela participam como seres humanos, e não porque participam dum direito de propriedade sobre os fundos investidos na sua actividade».

O princípio de participação como aqui é enunciado não nega o princípio de propriedade privada, mas detém em relação a este primazia. O mesmo é dizer que onde quer que homens se sirvam conjuntamente de meios de produção são eles que adquirem o direito de orientar e recolher os frutos da sua actividade.

Tudo indica que o mundo avança actualmente no caminho de formas de participação entendidas neste sentido. Um reconhecimento rápido e oficial deste princípio por parte da Igreja teria, pois, todo o interesse tornando-se Ela luz para o mundo, revelando-lhe o fim e o valor deste processo evolutivo.

Mas não basta, nos tempos de hoje, a Igreja anunciar a sua doutrina social. Tem também de agir e/ou ajudar a criar instituições apropriadas à passagem da sua doutrina à prática.

III

O crescimento das gigantescas companhias multinacionais, transportando dentro de si uma filosofia e prática materialistas e possuindo dimensões e poder incalculáveis, vai tornando claro que nenhum organismo social com dimensões inferiores às suas lhes poderá fazer face. A introdução do princípio de participação, em toda a sua extensão, requer, pois, uma instituição criada pela Igreja.

A natureza desta instituição poderia ser descrita como a de uma «ordem-movimento» — o termo movimento modificando a noção tradicional de ordem no sentido duma maior universalidade e dinamismo. Este movimento, caracterizado pelo espírito de serviço sócio-económico, que o coloca de certo modo em analogia com os sete diáconos, entre os quais Estêvão, se algum dia viesse a ser instaurado poderia chamar-se «movimento de S. Estêvão». A ele pertenceriam todos os que, convencidos da verdade do princípio de participação (como acima se definiu), quisessem dedicar-se à sua efectivação na vida profissional.

O movimento teria uma organização-mãe, universal, e grupos de trabalho locais, individuais e autónomos. Esta dualidade teria por fim garantir a separação entre os direitos de propriedade e o controlo das actividades económicas; contribuiria também para evitar os lucros excessivos. Os recursos económicos e certo nível de orientação técnica seriam fornecidos pela organização-mãe, os quais ser-lhe-iam retribuídos economicamente, de forma adequada, pelos respectivos grupos de trabalho. Por sua vez estas retribuições teriam de ser empregues no desenvolvimento e expansão dos grupos já existentes ou na criação de novos.

Quanto à aquisição das empresas, algumas seriam certamente empresas já existentes legadas ou doadas ao movimento, outras poderiam ser adqui-

ridas por se aproximarem da falência, pondo portanto em risco o emprego dos seus trabalhadores. Por outro lado novas empresas poderiam vir a ser criadas a pedido de grupos locais ou de governos, nacionais ou locais, ou ainda a partir da iniciativa de membros de empresas já existentes pertencentes ao movimento. De novo se manifesta aqui o interesse duma dualidade entre organização-mãe e os grupos de trabalho: o nascimento de novos grupos surgiria de uma ideia e não dum excesso de lucros (como geralmente acontece nas grandes companhias capitalistas).

O movimento seria aberto a todos sem distinção, mesmo religiosa; e nas empresas do movimento membros e não-membros participariam com igualdade de direitos.

A regra do movimento surgirá, naturalmente, duma discussão participada por todos os membros, mas talvez se distinguisse uma regra para todos e uma regra para os cristãos, relacionando-se esta sobretudo com a oração e outros aspectos religiosos.

O trabalho do movimento prepararia, certamente, o caminho para uma evangelização explícita, e o ambiente de segurança económica e moral que o caracterizaria seria propício ao desenvolvimento de virtudes humanas e cristãs importantes. Por outro lado a prática duma vida sã e do amor do próximo, e o trabalho conjunto de crentes e não-crentes seria de certo fonte de diálogo e contributo para que muitos encontrassem a fé.

PETER STILWELL