

Worse... Impossible

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The deterioration is slow but certain. Difficulties pile up and expectations worsen. The image of the government is systematically impoverished, without anyone being able to turn it around. The political parties and the pre-candidates exploit every chance to kick a man when he's down, unconcerned about the implications of their actions, whether it be PAN, PRD, Morena or the array of independents: each to his own. Suddenly a ray of light: Trump delivers everyone from their sufferings because he supplies the golden opportunity for a problem -or enemy- in common. The notion of a united front thus acquires cosmic dimensions: we are all migrants, we are all patriots, we are all good. We are everything, but the harsh reality.

Hard times call for unity and, in that, the summons of the President is impeccable. But a summons does not resolve years of cold-shouldering nor does it delegitimize Lopez Obrador's call to join forces behind him. The falsehood -intemperate and distant- of the calls for unity is evident to the entire citizenship, which has learned the hard way to distinguish the honest from the self-seeking. The impending sword of Damocles hanging over the head of Mexico matters to no one, because the true dispute is about the presidential succession and the conceit of the moment. If proof is needed, even the organizers of last Sunday's march were unable to reach an agreement on its objective.

The trouble with calls to unity is that they do not spark enthusiasm in anyone when they are against something: the population wants answers and solutions, not mere condemnation; in any case, they might have united in favor of something better. The migrants living in fear in the U.S. and their families in Mexico do not want marches and protests: perhaps they would join a call for the transformation of the country but they are not willing to sacrifice a single minute of their time on a fictitious exercise of togetherness. Worse when the President attempts to jump on the bandwagon to short-circuit his own unpopularity. Needless to add the obvious: however much Trump represents an enormous threat to the status quo, the mainstream Mexican is much angrier at the government; it is not by chance that innumerable organizations that joined the summons to the march opted in the end to drop out. No one wants to be part of a shipwreck: that includes the current government and many of those who saw some possibility in its reforms.

For nearly half a century, Mexicans have lived in the hope of a transformation that would allow it to break with the ties that bind the country to the past. Throughout all of these decades, there were many attempts to reform aspects of the economic and political life of the country, but none endeavored to establish the foundations for a distinct future, for full-fledged entry into the XXI century. The economic reforms created niches, spaces of exception, that have afforded Mexicans extraordinary relief, but not an integral solution; the politico-electoral reforms procured the

appeasement of the diverse oppositions, incorporating them into the PRIist system of privileges. Migrants sought jobs because there are no opportunities here.

Decades devoted to caring for the immediate crisis: mere patches and quick fixes: band-aids that help but do not solve anything. A few tweets from Trump were sufficient to lay bare the whole country, evidencing not only our lacks, but also our vulnerabilities. To address that, wrapping ourselves in the flag ends up being just one more act of braggadocio, a mere temper tantrum.

The disgust that the population is experiencing has not come about by chance and is not solved, as the leading candidate in the polls pretends, by a turning back the clock to an idyllic, easier era. The invitation to a “new national project” is very appealing (and no doubt attracts many desperate business people), but it clashes with the reality of the world we live in. Precedents are many, from Perón to Chávez, who not only destroyed what existed, but forever undermined the future of their nations. Many, starting with Trump, Xi, and Putin, aspire to recreating their old dreams of grandeur but nothing, except for the total destruction of the modern life and communications that characterize it, could change the leading role of public opinion, the social networks and the globalization of expectations in today's reality.

Mexico certainly needs to change; the question is where to and how. The calls for unity are nothing but the sudden nostalgic or self-interested flare-ups of those continuing to benefit from the old order and desiring to preserve it, which is why they wink at nationalistic and jingoistic overtures. Nationalism, wrote Orwell, is “power hunger tempered by self-deceit.”

Trump has catapulted us from our comfort zone and obligated us to make a choice: take a step firmly into the XXI century or accept that the deterioration will continue. What there is no doubt about is that, in the absence of change in current trends, the only possible way is down, and all those who abandon ship –some seeing no other option, others believing that joining at the outset can get them a double share of the pie- do nothing other than accelerate the pace. Those who think that things cannot get worse –before the elections and after- do not know history, from the Russian Revolution on, not to speak of the remote past.

Unity among people with different interests dedicated to building the future would be much more useful than a first-row seat on the Titanic.

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