

SOME ELEMENTS OF THE COLOMBIAN CONTEXT AND THE ORGANIZATIONAL PROPOSAL OF RED JUVENIL FROM MEDELLÍN

About the context:

“The colombian government, enlightened by the political and legal wisdom of José Obdulio Gaviria, sustains that in Colombia there doesn't exist an armed conflict, instead there is the official persecution of a terrorist group with the arms of the Republic”

(The paradoxes of the unexisting conflict, William Ospina. Revista Cromos– Enero 13 de 2008)

The demilitarization of the world, of the States, of the populations, has been a banner (slogan) that has been used parallelly to the political agendas of passed and actual rulers, that has matched with more humanist perspectives of life and political-filosofical conceptions of the 'art of government' and, why not, with the art of living, which would be more related to “human ethics of how to live in the world.”

War as well as peace are typical conditions of the Nation State and even of the royalist States. They have been the point of equilibrium desired by the rulers in the search for legitimacy of their governments, and ocasionaly represent the main target with which the voters or subjects place their trust in them to save and protect their nations.

Throughout the 20th century, we have seen the most desastrous war scenes as well as the most hypocritical and unpunished peace strategies, and in the midst of this dualism we have found other ways of recovery of life and other forms of 'fighting against oppression' which have not passed through the use of arms nor through the physical elimination of the opponent.

However, this first decade of the 21st century has marked a new meaning of peace and war which doesn't adjust any more to pure state debates but to supra-state debates where, at present time, there is an unilateral conception about PEACE AND WAR, meaning that a significant part of the humanist, antimilitarist, antiwarmongering intentions and non-violent and pacifist movements has been seriously affected by the 'SHOUTS OF DEATH, WAR AND VENEGANCE' which unfortunately revived after the events of 9/11.

Although the decade of the nineties hadn't been free of war, there hadn't been a consolidated hegemonical rhetoric for the re-interpretation of the world which would serve as a justification of war, not any longer the war of nations but the war of an EMPIRE which would loyally protect its Allies and attack its detractors without mercy.

The rhetoric of terrorism, the legitimation of preventive war, the power of mass media in order to militarize the human mind and to fill it with constant fears, have been the strategies which can be observed at present time as a consolidation and legitimation of militarism not only within the limits of political life but also as a common practice in everyday life.

If within this context we place the columbian, armed conflict and the perspectives or proposals for its solution as well as the demilitarization of everyday life, without doubt we can't omit the fact that today more than ever, the rhetoric of demilitarization has to go hand in hand with the worldwide and latin american struggle for the termination of an invasive, devastating war model, that refuses to recognize ethics based on life and which has revived extreme right-wing ideas such as 'The best species must survive' or 'This world is a world where only the strongest survive'. These are bio-political conceptions of life associated with Darwinian interpretations of life that today justify death, plundering and the huge gaps between a few human beings who have it all and others who die in absolute misery.

In order to talk about demilitarization it is indispensable to first understand the decade of WAR and HEGEMONICAL PEACE imposed by the EMPIRE and how these events affect the historical trajectory of the colombian conflict, and, of course, to highlight the local particularities, that produce many other complexities and that do not necessarily adjust themselves to international patterns.

Some questions (variables) for the achievement of demilitarization in Columbia

- In order to speak about demilitarization in Columbia, we would have to install the banner (slogan) of social and political negotiation of the armed conflict into the public sphere again.
- The social movements can't ignore that the rulers on duty keep on playing an essential role in peace and war policies and that, if this sphere is left untouched, many efforts to demilitarize everyday life, won't find an echo in the class of rulers we will continue to have.
- The Columbian conflict has produced whole generations born in midst of the war. The references of fear and elimination of the other as strategies for the 'achievement of power and recognition' has handed over entire populations to the will of one actor or another, or to its active participation in the conflict due to political adherence or to purely financial interests.
- The blend of a social and political conflict with the economy of drug trafficking has consolidated entire armies at the service of the best bidder, in contrast to armies that still are involved in the struggle for power under the banner of communist conceptions but who also feed on this business and therefore, their means and aims are seriously threatened by antimilitaristic, pacifist movements, since they basically use the same strategies as the oppressor.
- Even though there is a big debate and of course differences in the intentions and proceedings of the armed actors in Columbia, the antimilitaristic movements must get clear that after understanding and realizing the structural causes of the conflict, 'armed insurrection' can't be an alternative in Columbia, when the constant is exactly that everybody has justified the acquisition of arms in order to defend one self against the aggressor. The challenge for a country as our one is how to install ideas like 'POWER SHALL NOT BE DELEGATED, IT SHALL BE EXERCISED', since at the present time, people have delegated their capacity to decide and to solve conflicts to the armed actors. This aggravates the militarization of everyday life and it condemns us to a never ending vicious circle.
- For decades Columbia has been a country that has moved in the rhetoric of PEACE AND WAR, however, the time has come to talk with more force about desarmament, about reduction of military expenses and to promote with more strength the no-participation of the youth in legal and illegal armies.
- The total extermination, the tortures, the disappeared people, daily injustice, an oligarchical, paramilitary and killing class of rulers has been in part the explanation for why the country has never turned to the left and partly explains the existence of opposing armed groups. However, it is necessary to resize again the strategies for the achievement of justice, for the struggle for social and political change of the country, which has to be bound more to the construction of forms of non-violent struggle and to the more perseverant utilization of civil disobedience as a way of putting pressure on the oligarchy of this country.
- It is necessary to examine the historical intervention of the United States in Columbia. Even though the juncture of the military bases during the past few months has implied a rigorous look at the phenomenon, it is necessary to analyze it not as an isolated fact but as a permanent condition to which Columbian politics have been bound.

Red Juvenil, Youth and Resistance against War

- In 1991, Red Juvenil emerges in the centre-oriental zone of the City of Medellín, as a work methodology through which several leaders and youth groups of working-class neighbourhoods of the city and metropolitan area were integrated in order to share

feelings and thoughts about the troubled situation at the social, financial and political levels which was experienced due to the increasingly violent action of the drug traffickers in the city and in the country.

- During the first years, Red Juvenil aimed its actions towards the strengthening of the youth organization and the positioning of the youth movement, projecting the young person as a critical being, able to contribute, propose and construct alternatives to the armed conflict which was experienced from the neighbourhoods to the national sphere and vice versa.
- For the period 1995-1997, its definition moves forward to an organization of youth groups that contributes to the social movement through integration, political education and public action. At the same time begins the work referring to conscientious objection and antimilitarism. Non-violence is adopted as the commitment of the whole organization.
- The period from 1998 to 1992 is characterized by the political thinking about the issue of social movement of the youth. Also, the issue of civil disobedience is treated with much more strength and the first direct non-violent action is carried out in the year 2000.
- At the end of 2003 the organizational idea of zonal networks is given up and priority is set to the configuration of theme groups or youth groups oriented towards commitments to everyday, political and social transformation. The most relevant public actions were the campaigns against police brutality, administrative detentions, declarations of objectors and public actions of sensibilization about the issue of strong social militarization.
- Since 2004 and until present time, the proposal of theme groups committed to the social, political and financial transformation of the country emerging from their local contexts is being consolidated. The more continuous work of spreading and declaring of conscientious objectors is strengthened in the city of Medellín, and a significant work begins in the eastern, north-eastern and western counties of the region of Antioquia, where young male and female persons suffer the severity of forced draft by the army and paramilitary groups.
- A relation with rural processes, specifically with peace communities and communities in resistance, is being established, and the issue of antimilitarism begins to be related consistently to structural violence and therefore to the neo-liberal financial model. Through this channel, investigative exercises begin to be carried out concerning issues like 'how does the neo-liberal model affect young male and female people of the city of Medellín', the work for 'public services at home as a fundamental right' and actions directed towards demanding 'more social investment and less military expenses'.
- During the last years, Red Juvenil has achieved the generation of a clearer rhetoric concerning the colombian reality, and from this position it has re-created the method of popular non-violent struggle, as a way of expressing, demanding and mobilizing the social, financial and political transformation of the country.
- At present time, it is an organization that articulates groups, collectives and youth organizations promoted through different thematics of the organization, with the capacity of management, self management and incidence in the local, national and international spheres. Contributing to the increase of power of the youth, adopting active non-violence as a philosophy, articulating and integrating itself in political and social alternatives, as well as constructing new ways of political action, searching for the constitution and strengthening of a fair, including and human society committed to its own organizational forms.