

THE NEEDS OF OUR PEOPLES

In our Continent, from the poorest and less socially and economically developed countries to the most developed and prosperous, the most urgent needs converge on two fundamental areas: education and health. All the other areas that the political and planning establishment considers have to be listed at a lower priority, and budgets and resources allocated accordingly. While many relate the quality levels reached in education and health to the gross internal product or to other economic indicators, these economic factors do not become determinants of the productive work capacity of men and women. Education and health are the determinants of productive work capacity and progress, culture and development are its result.

Without an adequate development in the health realm, considering health in its integral sense, inclusive of preventive and curative attention, as well as the social security of the population, appropriate environmental conditions and, in general, the citizen's life quality, it is not possible to speak of a developed society. However, the societies of countries considered among the most 'developed' show a very meager development in this respect.

Certainly, the development level of any given country is closely related to its productive capacities, be of tangible goods and richness, or of cultural and moral values, and these depend markedly upon the education of the population. As the number of persons included in the educational process is larger and the quality of that education is better, the productive capacity of the society will be larger and more enduring.

Science education and humanistic education are both equally important, although the overwhelming technological progress that takes place nowadays makes the first one appear as the star. The progress of man as a social entity not only requires the needed food and clothing, comfort and machines, but it also requires of the structuring of a sense

of citizenship that will permit the individual to integrate an advanced society.

The rational utilization of natural resources also constitutes a means to achieve the desired wellbeing. But this requires of an intelligent exploitation, and to achieve it the necessary human resources have to be trained. If those who administer the yield of such resources, that is, the governments, are not able to establish adequate education and health levels among their people, in the long run the natural resources and the benefits obtained fade away and little or nothing remains. Along our history there are abundant examples of the squandering of resources, generally caused by the lack of knowledge, and also by a bizarre citizenship plagued with corruption.

Due to circumstances that can't be considered neither extraordinary nor fortuitous, since the independence wars there have been very few military encounters between countries in our region, most of them being discrete interventions of short duration. On the other hand, internal fights and conflicts, as well as criminality, have produced tens of thousands of victims at the interior of several of our countries. The probabilities that any nation could win a confrontation with the great powers are null. Therefore, the investments in arms are only effective to threaten the people inside the countries and to keep content the armed forces. The obvious pacifist spirit of the countries of the region always has avoided armed conflicts between our countries.

It is not possible to consider that the arms industry constitutes an important source of labor and economically productive investment. However, it is not weapons and war capacity the factors that determine the wellbeing of the people. On the contrary, they engross the statistics of disabled and dead people. The educational level, and that of the health and wellbeing of the people will never improve with a war.

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