

LETTER TO THE WORLD from CEFERESO # 1 by Antonio Cerezo Contreras

“When the impossibility of replacing a person is accepted, this opens the way for man to fully assume responsibility for his existence. A man who becomes conscious of the responsibility he bears towards a human being who affectionately waits for him, or to an unfinished work, will never be able to throw away his life. He knows the why of his existence and will be able to withstand almost any how.”

Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, p. 117

In these lines, Viktor E. Frankl reflects on his own life and on life in a Nazi concentration camp where people suffered truly inhuman treatment. Nevertheless, there, where life was “the object of extermination,” he clung to his existence and struggled to survive day by day.

Héctor and I don't live in a Nazi concentration camp. Although things happen here that closely resemble one, this reality is a long way from that. The adversity of our own circumstances, however, has led us to take responsibility for struggling for our freedom.

We know that we have an enormous commitment to all the people and organizations that have shown solidarity with us throughout these long years of reclusion. Our commitment becomes concrete in our daily task of surviving and creating. We know that the people who love us are anxiously waiting for us, and we are also anxiously awaiting that encounter, a new encounter with freedom.

Moreover, we await the possibility of finishing our studies and developing a rich professional life, without forgetting that there will still be prisoners to struggle for and new injustices that we must try to overcome.

We have people that we care for, goals to fulfill, an inevitable and irrevocable commitment to life and to our people, and above all, to those who are conscious and who struggle for better conditions of life.

People who know us are aware that resisting and struggling is, and has been, a duty that has guided us during our time in jail. They know that we'll never renounce this duty because that would be to renounce our condition of being free men, even though they're holding us prisoner; it would be to renounce our own dignity, to renounce our principles and values.

Given the current context of social struggle, which we couldn't extract ourselves from even if we wanted to, and the response of the State to this struggle, it's necessary to reaffirm that neither Héctor or I, for any reason whatsoever or in any circumstance whatsoever, would ever make an attempt on our own physical or emotional integrity. Our well-being is in the hands of those who have held us prisoner for more than five years. Although some may try to make people believe that murder is suicide, as they did in the case of Digna Ochoa, this is NEVER true. Once again, we reaffirm our commitment to life itself and to our struggle for a better world.

How complex current reality is! And how sad it is in so many ways! One has to ask if it's moral, legal, and just to break the law in order to enforce it. Because that's what's

happened in relation to the social conflict going on in Oaxaca. The law has been broken by the government itself to demand that the social movement obeys it, in the event that it hasn't done so at one time or another.

Breaking the law, twisting it, or failing to comply with it with the aim of forcing someone else to obey, is neither moral, legal, or just; thus, any of these actions is reprehensible and totally unjustifiable.

The social conflict in Oaxaca, however, cannot be reduced to who are the "good guys" and who are the "bad," nor to who broke the law first or who has the material power to impose itself on others in its name.

If, as many analysts say, the problem of Oaxaca has deep roots in social and economic inequality, it is essential to go to the root of the problem in order to resolve the inequitable social and economic system that is now dominant in the state.

Repression doesn't solve problems. It puts them off. It covers them up. It ends up exposing them, but nothing more.

When Porfirio Díaz ordered the massive deportation of the de Yaquis and Mayos to Yucatán or to the Valle Nacional, it didn't resolve land problems. It just eliminated the evidence of the problems temporarily, because in the end, both the Yaquis and the Mayos joined the revolutionary forces in search of an effective solution to their problems.

Will the massive imprisonment of Oaxacan people and other participants in the social movement resolve Oaxaca's social problems? Will federal prisons be the solution to discontent born in poverty, exploitation, and lack of development opportunities in all aspects?

The social movement in Oaxaca can be crushed and dismantled by repression, as was the case with the railroad workers' movement in the 1950s and the popular student movement of 1968, but it's important to remember that repression in and of itself never resolved the economic, political, and social problems of those years, but instead was largely responsible for the efforts of many people to transform social reality by other means.

Porfirio Díaz governed the country with an "iron hand. "Strike while the iron is hot" was an effective solution for doing away with dissidence. The cemeteries of the prisons at San Juan de Ulua and the Valle Nacional of Yucatán were the destination of hundreds of people who opposed the dictatorship. The repressive method used by Díaz allowed him to convert his slogan, "Law, Order, and Progress" into reality, at least in part. Industry and foreign investment increased dramatically in our country and Mexico was "modernized" at the cost of the lives of its own people.

The army, rural guard, local despots, bourgeoisie, and omnipotent government rulers used force, money, and political power, but all this "Order," all this "Law and Progress" created the material and ideological conditions for the revolutionary outbreak.

It's true that repression guarantees the "Order" desired by those who impose it in the short run, but not in the long run. On the contrary, repression creates instability in the sense that it generates potential inconformity.

If the situation of Oaxaca or Atenco is repeated in another state or in other towns, there won't be enough prisons to resolve these conflicts. Repression can impose "Order" in Oaxaca; it can use imprisonment, torture, murder, and even forced disappearances as a daily method of control. But for how long? How long will it be until the social explosion becomes more violent?

Moreover, achieving "Order" and "Progress" through repression is neither moral, legal, nor just. Justifications will be forthcoming. Books and articles will be written in this vein. But reality is more stubborn than the arguments used to cover it up, those that television programs use to try to create a fictitious reality, modifying it according to the interests of the State.

For the class in power, the social, economic, and political problems it now faces have nothing to do with morality, legality, or justice. They only have to do with their economic interests and ways of satisfying them. In any case, for them, appealing to what is moral, just, and legal is just a way to stay in power and keep raking in money and building up capital

Our social reality is of tremendous concern. We'd be wrong to close our eyes and refuse to commit ourselves to trying to transform it for the benefit of the entire society and not just a few. What does the future hold for us as a society? It's up to all of us to determine. Meanwhile, we, who are prisoners of conscience and prisoners held for political motives are worried about the way in which our numbers are increasing and the possibility that prison conditions will worsen as punishment for struggling for a better world.

Our solidarity and our hearts go out to the new prisoners who are beginning a new and very difficult stage, both personally and in the social struggle, but also to all the other victims of repression and to their compañeros.

Democracy cannot be constructed at the expense of the lives of dozens of people, in total contempt of their freedom, in total contempt of their physical and psychological integrity. It's not moral. It's not legal. It's not just.

¡Freedom for all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience!

Five years and one month since the murder of Digna Ochoa

Five years and three months of illegal, unjust imprisonment

¡Prisoners today, forever free!

Prisoner of conscience Antonio Cerezo Contreras

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¡FREEDOM FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS AND PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE!

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"Because being a human rights defender is not synonymous with being a terrorist"

COMITÉ CERESO MÉXICO