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WANDERING WORDS

Francisco de Jesús Aceves-González

IMPACT OF THE ENTERPRISE FOR THE AMERICAS ON LATIN AMERICAN CULTURE AND MEDIA

Javier Esteinou-Madrid

ART, TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY: PARAMETERS FOR A NON- EXPLORED FIELD OF COMMUNICATIONS RESEARCH

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ALTERNATIVE READING ON INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

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SOME REMARKS ON NAFTA AND THE MEXICAN AUDIOVISUAL FIELD

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Impact of the Enterprise for the Americas on Latin American Culture and Media

Javier Esteinou-Madrid

Given the inevitable globalization of Latin American economies, the formation of new hegemonic zones and the growing strength of free market principles throughout society as reflected in the Free Trade Agreement and Bush's Enterprise for the Americas, we feel it is urgent and key to consider whether with the industrialization processes that emerged with import substitution programs from the 1930s on, the cultural structure of Latin American society was rapidly transformed by radio and television to create a consumer mentality, atomize individual participation and erode national identity.

We must ask what will happen to us spiritually as individuals and as a society given global integration and increasing ties to the world market if the communications media is not consciously planned. What will be the effect on our way of thinking, given the loss of historical memory, particularly with the Nafta-induced ideological assault on our cultural identity through television and video networks?.

How can independent cultural identity be preserved given the climate of growing communications globalization, the opening up of mental boundaries and the formation of transnational culture? What will Latin America gain and lose in the cultural field with the free trade agreements? How much will the new cultural and informational structures aid true development of our societies and their spiritual and material development? What aspects of our national cultures should be up for grabs with the new free market agreements?

These questions pose the urgent need to reflect on the role played by our culture and the place of the communications media in preserving our national identity in the framework of the accelerated modernization that Latin America is experiencing. At stake is the cultural soul of the Latin American nation states, threatened by the new reflections of modernization and its parasitic symbols derived from the new stage of the development of international capitalist society.

I. The rise of a new Latin American development model

The exhaustion of Latin America's traditional development model during the last 20 years, pressure from foreign banks to renegotiate our monumental foreign debts and the resulting social and political crises made Latin American governments abandon the classic import substitution strategies aimed at domestic consolidation that they had been im-

plementing for several decades. A new phase of Latin American development has gradually emerged basing growth fundamentally on modernization. This modernization is characterized by funding domestic recovery and growth of local economies with increased exports and injecting foreign capital into the region.

This change in regional development policy heralded the end of the paternalistic protectionist stage that Latin

American societies went through for decades. That stage gave rise to the "welfare state" or "subsidizer state", epitomized by the theory that "the ideal State is one in which all social spheres, without exception, should be subsidized."

It is within this framework that a radical change took place in the traditional Latin American economic model, import substitution, distinguished by a complex system of generalized protectionist tariffs, a deeply-rooted bureaucracy, strict financial controls, a prejudice against exporting, fiscal exemptions, enormous numbers of regulations, large captive domestic markets, an abundance of low cost labor, preferential interest rates for promoting industry and a lack of international competition. Today, another model has been created based on deregulation, competitiveness in production, financial pragmatism, the promotion of foreign investment, trade openings, freeing up prices, labor efficiency, privatization of state-owned companies, less State participation in the economy, free access to all markets, private sector financing of infrastructure, a rapid multinationalization of the basic economy, intensive use of cutting edge technology, reduction of an overblown state apparatus, growing interdependence with international economic processes, continuity in governmental long and medium-term development policies, and the globalization of the economy to join the New World Economic Order created by the Trilateral Commission after the end of the Cold War.

The Latin American states recognized that national economies could no longer act autonomously and inde-

pendently. This led to the conclusion that their societies could no longer survive outside the new economic globalization processes and the international division of labor that today's restructuring of the capitalist mode of production is imposing worldwide. Resistance to global change would only cause our societies to be further marginalized through a suspension of foreign credit, non-existent foreign investment, technological backwardness, enormous pressure from abroad, domestic political unrest, recession, etc. This would lead to our economies' profound stagnation and eliminate our viability as nations in the short and medium term.

The end of the national growth cycle known as import substitution, which lasted 40 years, was publicly recognized, as was the need for a "new model of economic development" which required Latin America's productive and political apparatus to modernize to be able to face world competition, to avoid "the momentum of change in today's world sweeping our homelands away."

Latin American societies then abandoned their state-guided protectionist models and began a new phase of existence ruled by the "laws of the market". Development in the region, then, depends less and less on subsidies or privileges to particular sectors of society and more on the broadest free competition. Latin American states have also begun a phase of deep structural changes, including the sale of most public companies and a move toward leading, coordinating and orienting the domestic economy, not through owning important parts of it, but through regulations and the play of the market. The new

development model is increasingly ruled by the market and not the State.

To this end, the Latin American states are fostering the economic, political and social processes needed for our societies to leave behind the old trans-Atlantic Euro-American axis that has held worldwide hegemony in this century. They are now integrating themselves into the new thorough reorganization of Western capitalism, linking themselves to the three new poles of world development: the European Common Market (Germany, Great Britain, France, Italy, Holland, Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Austria, the 19 countries that will begin to exist in 1993, plus the ex socialist countries of Eastern Europe that become part of the bloc); the North American Common Market, which will soon include the United States, Canada and Mexico, and in the long term will include the rest of Latin America with the creation of the Central American Market and the Southern Cone Common Market; and the Pacific Rim Market, formed by 24 mainland countries and 23 island nations and led by "the Four Tigers", Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong and South Korea.

II. Latin American culture and communications in times of free trade

Faced with the historically inevitable globalization of Latin America's economies, the creation of new hegemonic regions and the growing establishment of market principles in all aspects of our societies, particularly with Bush's Enterprise for the Americas heralding the rise of a Latin

American Free Trade Agreement, we believe it is central and urgent to ask ourselves if the industrialization process generated by import substitution from 1930 onward rapidly changed the cultural structure of Latin American societies through radio and television, creating a consumerist, non-participative mentality that eroded our national identities. Now, what will happen to us spiritually, as societies and as individuals, upon entering the phase of world integration and rapidly forming part of the international market without planning the use of our communications media? What will happen to the structure of our thinking and feelings when a region in a stage of cultural retreat, loss of its historic [collective] memory and cerebral immaturity, when its cultural heritage is ideologically saturated through television networks and video complexes at work in the new economic blocs in our communities? How can independent cultural projects of the Latin American nation-states be preserved in an atmosphere of growing communications globalization, of the opening of mental frontiers and the creation of supranational cultures? What will Latin America gain and what will it lose culturally with the signing of free trade agreements? How much will our societies really be developed and grow in both the material and spiritual realm with the new cultural and information structure being created by modernity? Which aspects of our national cultures should be negotiated and which should not in the new free market agreements?

This is the source of the urgent need to reflect on the role our culture and the communications media play in preserving our national essence amid the

dynamic of accelerated modernizing change in Latin America. World globalization will bring us a new cultural order that tends to modify both the content and ideological frontiers of existing national states. Otherwise, the cultural soul of our societies run the enormous risk of being buried under the new mirages of modernity and their parasitic, symbolic derivatives of this new phase of international capitalist development.

For this reason we consider it a priority today to consider the broad tendencies of change that Latin American culture and communications will go through with cultural globalization – brought by the application of the laws of the market– and to provide the conceptual and action alternatives needed to face and assimilate them maturely.

Tendencies of cultural projects in the framework of the laws of the market

Latin America's process of "modern transformation" since the 1980s, particularly with the preparations for the consolidation of regional free trade agreements, is bringing about profound changes in the economic, political, social, agrarian, technological, mental and legal structures. These changes are in turn modifying the way the majority of the Latin American population lives, works, produces, competes and is organized and educated.

But these changes are not only having an impact on the economic and political structure of Latin American societies; they also have deep repercussions in our region's cultural and informational structure. This is why it is extremely important today to

analyze how the application of the laws of the market in the stage of cultural globalization will change the very marrow and dynamic of consciousness in our continent.

Upon reflection, it becomes clear that for this development model to be put into operation in Latin America, new legislation and the establishment of the productive, technical, labor and legal conditions needed must be implemented. It also demands the existence of a new modernizing mass consciousness that will back up and consolidate the other changes. We can see that there is an attempt to create this mentality through the mass media and other elements of cultural infrastructure, to establish the subjective conditions needed for the functioning of our societies within the competitive relations of the world market.

This modernizing consciousness in cultural matters implies that Latin America is now taking on board the rapid and indiscriminate acceptance of the pragmatic, technocratic principles of neo-liberal rationality, "informational *laissez faire*" in spiritual and communications matters. Another version of the same point of view is the mentality that says, "If culture makes no money, it's useless." These principles, taken to their logical conclusion, really mean that instead of strengthening our national spirit, they are in danger of becoming even more flexible, or even eroding them more, eliminating mental barriers, to efficiently incorporate them into the new structure of competition and accumulation in world markets.

The flowering of modernizing theories that promote privatization, retreat, cut-backs, deregulation, globalization and

transnationalization in all spheres of public life in our region means that more and more often the idea is formulated that culture in Latin American societies should not be interfered with by state planning policies, but should be ruled by the "natural", perfect equilibrium produced by the play of free market laws among producers and consumers. To make Latin American societies' cultural fields fit in with the new market needs, the traditional concept of communications as a product of society is altered, and rapidly begins to be understood as simply another commodity that must obey the principles of supply and demand. With this, the social process based on the dynamic of "Who says what, through what channels, to whom and with what effects?" is abandoned and replaced by the formula, "Who pays what, to whom and how?"

The growing sway of the laws of the market in the cultural and communications fields leads Latin American governments to propose they be more productive, that traditional monopolies will be broken to promote free cultural competition; product quality will rise; new areas will be opened up in which society can participate; the effectiveness of cultural dynamics will be enhanced; the modernization of informational infrastructure will speed up; funding sources of cultural efforts will broaden out and become more versatile; the development of new mental structures opening up to the world flow of information will accelerate, etc. In a word, that these activities will be profoundly enriched by their association with the processes of modernity.

However, despite these possible advantages promised by the rapid application of the laws of the market over and

above other social dynamics in the communications/cultural field with the establishment of Latin American free trade agreements, we can observe that these actions will not be strong or dynamic enough to overcome the tremendous mental and informational contradictions in our society. What is more, it is possible that the eminently mercantile nature of this economic reasoning, when applied to the spiritual and cultural fields in our communities, may actually increase the conflicts between national cultures in our region. There is a serious possibility that what may actually occur is the application of a false law between supply and demand between producers and consumers, for the following two reasons:

In the first place, today, the relationship between producers and consumers is deeply altered by the deformation of consumption through advertising by Latin America's great monopolies. Many Latin American societies of the 1990s no longer have a natural consumer demand; rather, we are increasingly confronted with consumer decisions or tastes induced by the enormous advertising saturation campaigns produced daily by the mass media in different fields of consciousness of our peoples. This has gone to such extremes that often today demand depends on supply and not the other way around. Products are put on the market and sold, not because of their physical-material properties but because of the strategic role that advertising persuasion techniques play in our senses and unconscious.

Therefore, in many cases in Latin America today, the market has ceased to be a relationship of natural equilibrium

among the economic elements of production and consumption as originally posited by pure liberalism. It has become the imposition of an artificial relationship between the great monopolies and the population to satisfy the needs of the former for concentration of wealth.

In the second place, although the classical theories of free enterprise state that competition is freely exercised, in today's world, the real practice of the most advanced liberalism in our continent demonstrates that this freedom is non-existent. Increasingly, the more developed nations establish protectionist measures to favor the more fragile areas of their economies. This means that the application of market principles is not really instituting a dynamic of free competition, but at bottom, one of economic authoritarianism on the part of the great trusts operating in our region.

In this sense, the strategic role the new modernizing development model in Latin America gives to the market as the driving force that leads and models social processes is transformed into the central condition from which the origin, meaning and destiny of the main cultural and communications products in our sub-continent are derived. That is to say, within the recent model of neo-liberal growth that our region has begun to take on board, the true reactivation of national communications and cultural projects does not stem from the age-old demand of numerous basic social groups for the solution of the most pressing social needs of the Latin American population. Rather, it derives from the rapid incorporation of our societies in the world market, which in reality is nothing less

than the reactivation and intensification of the super-multinational economic project in the periphery.

From the human point of view, this means that in Latin America the market -and not social forces and processes- will increasingly be the authority that determines the value of people and of life. That is, social recognition, the dignity of the individual, his/her economic retribution, etc., will increasingly be defined and valued by the market and not by the dynamics of justice and humanization that our region demands.

For example, this can be seen in the labor-management relationship in Latin American societies. We can see that paradoxically, -and in contrast with our mother cultures in which the "Old Man" was valued for his wisdom and played a leading role in society- today, with the increasing market logic in contract relationships, when Latin American workers approach 40 or 45 years of age and are at their top maturity, they are no longer hired by the majority of "modern" companies because they are not competitive. This shows how human value is increasingly determined by the market and not by social processes of valuing the individual.

The application of market laws to education in some countries like Mexico is eliminating university majors in some fields of knowledge (like philosophy, anthropology, sociology, political science, history and other disciplines in the humanities) with the argument that they are not profitable or necessary for modernity because they are not productive. Technical fields that do promote business are being fostered in their place. Faced with this, we must ask ourselves what will happen to those com-

munities that progressively eliminate those disciplines dealing with knowledge of their own societies.

The application of such a pragmatic policy is creating the basis of a profound "social blindness" of enormous dimensions, since the principles of the market are destroying the fields of human knowledge specializing in the analysis of our communities. In addition, the understanding of our domestic situation will come increasingly from abroad, which, as historian John Coatsworth says, "is already happening in the field of history, in which today there are more U.S. researchers who study Mexico than Mexicans."

In the field of ecology, we find that the United States of America was the only country in the international community that did not sign the Accord on Biological Diversity at the Earth Summit (the World Conference for the Environment and Development) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. It was not in its economic or trade interests to do so, despite being the country that consumes 25% of the world's energy and in full knowledge of the fact that it is gravely endangering the conservation of life on the planet, particularly that of animal and plant species, which become extinct at the rate of 100 to 300 a day. Its argument was that, "It did not accept the Treaty because its practical application would be very expensive for the U.S. market economy."

In education, this means that marketing techniques -and not the lines of social and spiritual development of our communities- will increasingly govern the orientation and activities of cultural and communications institutions in Latin America. That is, Latin American

neo-liberal modernization basically reduces the state and society's communications and cultural project to strengthening and expanding the market relations that back up the project of global super-accumulation in our region. It does not orient it to broadening out and strengthening the most open cultural, democratic and participative projects that have for so long been demanded by the majorities of our continent's inhabitants.

This means that as communications and culture are gradually taken over by the laws of the market, the consciousness they will produce in Latin America through the media and other cultural infrastructure will increasingly be a venture for profit, ruled by the five following guiding principles:

First, they will aim at making a profit, in the short term and cost what it may. The shorter the time needed for a return on the investment, the more attractive a project will be. This means that most investment in communications and culture will be decided directly according to the time needed for a return on the investment and not on the basis of other, more human criteria, based on historical balance, like those introduced by the Latin American welfare state.

To understand the repercussions that the laws of the market could have on the cultural field, we must keep in mind, for example, that the application of the principles of supply and demand in logging has devastated the Mexican forests around Morelia, Michoacan, because of the practice of quick-cutting and the pillage of these areas in search of a fast profit. This same attitude of the plunderer is found in the cultural field.

This is why a more intense application of the principles of the market in communications through free trade agreements must lead us to expect an enormous increase in the erosion of the bases of our mental structures of national identity.

In the second place, profits will be seen only in terms of money and not in any other form, like "social enrichment", "the humanization of the population" or "the mental development of the community". For the state of our culture and information, this means that activities that do not produce cash profits and only cash profits, will not be backed by Latin America's main communications institutions. Therefore, cultural support projects for social development will increasingly be marginalized or will disappear.

For example, in Mexico, in the field of science, government officials from the National Council for Science and Technology (CONACYT) have said, "Today, every researcher has to have a businessman in tow who is willing to finance his technological development projects."

In music in Mexico, singer Eugenia León and composer Armando Manzanero told the press, "The market for records, radio and television has been the cause of a deterioration in the public's musical taste, particularly among middle class people. This continues to worsen because the large companies impose conditions to make sure what is recorded is profitable." Composer Julio Briseño agreed, saying that the market is not conducive to creating the conditions for developing the horn sounds that would recover Renaissance

and Baroque music as fundamental stages for understanding our expressive history in Western Culture.

In the visual arts, particularly in Latin America, "artistic creation has lost its value in itself and is now given a market price by galleries, magazines and collectors who see an object of art as an investment and not a means for creating beauty or culture or expressing the special moment we are experiencing. In this way, the spiritual use value of artistic production has been lost and has given way to its exchange value. This means that one of the great problems faced by Latin American art today is that it no longer goes into museums but into financial operations. Therefore, in many cases, art criticism has been replaced by what is called the art chronicler, someone who writes favorably about an artist because he or she is paid by a gallery to do so."

Mexican classical music has suffered the disappearance of the six-year-old Bajío Symphony Orchestra (OSB) because it did not become a musical school to generate its own funding. The Bajío Symphony Orchestra had performed more than 700 concerts in 40 municipalities of the state of Guanajuato—some of them very isolated geographically—before an total audience of more than 400,000 people.

Mexican radio saw the cancellation in 1992 of government- and privately-funded cultural projects for children's and other specially-directed education. "XERIN Radio Infantil", government-run under the auspices of the Mexican Radio Institute (IMER), closed because it was not highly profitable. Its frequency was taken over by Radio 660, "La Estación Deportiva y Tropical", a lucra-

tive and prosperous business prospect with sure-fire profits. Among private stations, "Radio Alicia", an affiliate of Núcleo Radio Mil (NRM), was eliminated because the nearing of the free trade agreement made it necessary to adapt to internationalization and make space in the market for foreign investors. "Radio Alicia" was replaced by "Radio-X-Press", transmitting news and music in English.

In the third place, the law of supply and demand forces the waste of tons of products in Latin America, plagued by all kinds of unsatisfied vital needs. In the same way, the application of market laws to intellectual fields will force the production of the most profitable parasitic ideologies, to the detriment of more important values that form the basis of our communities, memories and nations. The latter are not highly profitable in short-term, monetary terms and may even counter market growth. In a society run exclusively or mainly on the basis of the principles of supply and demand, the market will "naturally" eliminate all cultural forms that are inefficient in the race for over-accumulation and social over-consumption, and will foster those that do permit material expansion.

We must remember that the market has neither ethics nor heart, nor is it concerned with human and social needs. Its object is the rapid and increasing accumulation of wealth, no matter what the cost. Therefore, if allowed to function autonomously, with no important planning counterweights, it could absolutely savage social, cultural and communications relations in the Latin American communities.

For example, Mexico's 1990 milk production had a yearly deficit of more than 5 million liters, which led, just in 1992, imports of 150,000 tons of powdered milk. Chronic malnutrition in more than half the workforce and 40% of children causes the death of 50,000 babies yearly. School children perform badly because they are underweight and hungry. Six of every 10 Mexicans are anemic and more than 17 million people live in extreme poverty, etc. During the application of the law of supply and demand, Mexican companies wasted or destroyed more than 2,000 tons of fruit in Chilpancingo in 1991; 40 tons a day of tomato and squash in Tulancingo, Hidalgo; hundreds of tons of sugar in Guadalajara, Jalisco; 35,000 tons of soybeans in Culiacan, Sinaloa; 15,000 tons of tomato in Morelos; 16,800 tons of crab apples in central Mexico; 10,000 tons of soybeans bought from China in Salina Cruz, Oaxaca; 800 tons of fruit and vegetables a day in Mexico City's Central Market, etc. All this to maintain efficiency and shore up prices of products that needed market leveling.

Latin America urgently needs to create an ecological culture, a culture of the protection of water, urban civility, rationalization of non-renewable resources, human tolerance, the defense of animal species and biodiversity, of fostering life, reforestation, protection of the earth, etc., to survive as societies. But at the same time and in that same context, the electronic information media, ruled by market principles, will tend to build a climate of cultural waste by producing a culture of frivolity, hyper-consumption, "fashion", transnationalization, a culture of

spectacles, artists, shows, commodity fetishism, etc. Though they may all be highly profitable, they lead us to waste the huge stores of human energy in the continent needed to face our enormous problems of growth and human survival.

In this sense, in the kingdom of market principles in the cultural field, we will increasingly see "cultural Malthusianism" whereby social conscience is replaced by the business mentality, unlimited profits, working for gain, economic pragmatism, ownership as the meaning of life and technical progress as the new religion, over and above all other values of human survival.

The application of the laws of the market to the economy during the preparations for Latin America's entrance into the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and its access to free trade agreements were the cause of the bankruptcy of the electronic, tool and die, textile, plastics, food, weaving, furniture, footwear and manufacturing industries in general, as well as small retailers, restaurants, agriculture and many others. Now, with the recent incursion of the principles of the market in the cultural field, we can ask ourselves what world views, ideologies and cultural values that identify our national civilizations and hold them together will succumb to the onslaught of the parasitic culture that the modernizing project of material accumulation will produce on a super-multinational scale through their communications industries.

In the fourth place, this neo-liberal process of extreme mercantilization of Latin American culture and communications will tend to solely produce consciousness, education, tradition and

idiosyncrasies that are functional in increasing the accumulation of capital, particularly on a mega-multinational scale. It will marginalize the construction of the indigenous political cultures that our regional project of natural development requires. We can say, then, that toward the end of the twentieth century, the neo-liberal project introduced into Latin America will intensively produce the new "Junk Culture" of the expansion of capital, and will reduce the "Culture of Life and Humanization" so necessary for the survival of our region and the planet Earth. This is because the latter is not profitable, unless the situation becomes critical and human and social deterioration is so acute that it enters into contradiction with the production rate and the concentration of wealth.

This means that if the creation of Latin American cultural processes are basically run according to market economy principles and not according to other, more balanced, social considerations, we run the enormous risk as societies of being led into a savage system of communications. This would be characterized by the superfluous being given priority over the basic; entertainment over thought; escapism over increased awareness; the incitement to consume over civic participation; funding of profitable projects over humanistic ones; the commodity fetishism of our senses over the humanization of our awareness; money as a model for our values over humanization, mental homogeneity over cultural differentiation, etc.

Finally, in fifth place, if we abandon for the moment the earth-bound Latin American context and situate ourselves

on a cosmic plane, we can see that a true law of the market is not really being applied. If the laws of supply and demand are rigorously applied, we see that scarce items are the most valued and given the highest price in today's economy. For this reason, gold, platinum and diamonds, for example, are highly sought-after goods in our society.

Until now, all science and its systematization of empirical data gathered by specialists (the new astronomy, etc.) and 20,000 years of human knowledge prove that human life exists only on Earth. If we apply the laws of the market rigorously, this means that, strictly speaking, from the economic standpoint of the cosmic market, the most valuable thing in the universe must be life because it exists nowhere else.

Every day we see the laws of supply and demand makes rare or scarce material resources valuable. But at the same time, those laws give the least value to life itself. What is more, we can say that in neo-liberal culture, the value of a person depends increasingly on whether he or she possesses things or power or whether they are efficient, and less and less on their basic worth as people or human beings.

IV. What is to be done? Toward a policy of social liberalism in the field of collective communications

In the new context of modernization and the evolutionary limits on Latin American civilizations, we must conclude that leaving a large number of activities that are strategic to the development of Latin American states in the hands of business would mean risking

their disappearance. This is the case of preventive medicine, public urban transport or basic science. Likewise, we cannot leave to business the construction of "a social culture for national survival". Although on a long-term basis, paradoxically, cultural planning is the most profitable economic investment that can be made in Latin America, in the short run it is not profitable according to the "money-making" criteria of today's neo-liberal view of life.

For example, in the field of physics, the discovery of Higgs' Boson or the invention of the SCC, the world's most expensive particle accelerator, could not have happened without the millions contributed by the European Economic Community or the United States. Similarly, the State and civil society must create a culture of ecology, of conserving the species that form the reproductive life chains; a culture of the defense of old people; of caring for the Earth, of living together with others, of valuing each nation's heritage, of promoting life; a culture of reforestation, or humanizing our cities. These are the minimum levels of intellectual strength needed to build and preserve culturally in order to survive in Latin America. For the business community, there is no profit in it.

This panorama of growing communications and spiritual inequality arising in our region through the action of the laws of the market means that the Latin American governments must create the conditions for a different cultural balance, through a new policy, a policy of "social liberalism in communications". This policy does not exist today and is urgently needed to be able to co-exist. Using the example of

Mexico, the government re-privatized the State-owned banks and at the same time promoted the creation of development banks to support weaker sectors of the economy; it also sold public companies and used the monies obtained to fund social projects through the National Solidarity Program. Just as the laws of the market have been allowed to play a growing role in the cultural field, "social communications", stemming from the needs of the majority of the population to express itself and participate ideologically, must be supported.

This would make it possible to recover the positive things the market economy has to offer in the cultural field: efficiency, competitiveness, individual freedom, the opening up of markets, new sources of funding, etc. At the same time, it would provide the cultural counterweights for the needed evening up on a mental plane that are necessary for survival but are not part of the economic outlook of Latin American neo-liberalism. It must be taken into account that giving free rein to cultural and communications forces will not automatically spur a communication in Latin America. To achieve that, social planning must be put into motion with a high degree of participation of the region's civil societies. There are planning counterweights that cannot be bureaucratic, State-linked, paternalistic or populist, but which do connect Latin America's main needs for social development with the dynamic of cultural production.

If this does not happen, the natural limitations that the market economy places on communications dynamics will create more cultural contradictions than those that it hopes to overcome with the

introduction of the "social communications rationality" in the public sphere. If this social liberalism policy in Latin America's communications and cultural fields is not created, there will be an increasing gap between the material and spiritual necessities for social growth, on the one hand, and the collective intellectual capacity needed to achieve them, on the other.

In this sense, for our own good as a continent, today we must demand a most rigorous answer from ourselves to the following questions: In the medium and long term, how much will this development model contribute to creating a culture that will truly foster the growth of our Latin American societies and how much will it constitute a step backward for humanity? What cultural actions can be taken to reinforce our national identities within the framework of market principles? How can we produce a culture of Latin American social development within the dynamic of supply and demand? How can the pressures of an economic model that tends to deform Latin America's cultural structure in order to increase material accumulation be combined with the urgent need to create a global culture for human survival and the respect for life? What is the cultural content of a Latin American national policy of social liberalism?

If we do not ask ourselves these and other questions honestly and rigorously, we will find that at the height of Latin American modernization, the economic, political, legal, technological structures of our societies will have changed. But, the most profound mental structures will not have changed. And it is these that, in the last analysis, are the sup-

ports for and give life to our region. Under those circumstances, Latin American societies will be moving forward blindfolded along a very dangerous mental precipice; and within

a few years, we will see and suffer the devastating consequences on our collective consciousness and behavior of the logic of the market on our continent's culture and spirit.