

Mexico urgently needs rebuilding

Napoleón Gómez Urrutia

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The monumental tragedies befalling the country in recent days should give all Mexicans pause for serious reflection. We are witnessing, first of all, that our people are something very special, impressive in their solidarity and generous reaction to such sad events. We've been saying this in Mexico, and it's been noticed across the world. A people like ours deserves every right to a free and dignified life, and to enjoy living well. The tearing apart that any catastrophe brings has set us on the path to understanding who we truly are as a nation, and as a society.

Secondly, it is becoming clear that many things are going wrong, very wrong, with our country, society and politics, because on top of the natural disasters of earthquakes and hurricanes, these phenomena are catching us in a social state that is as pitiful, if not more so, than the tragedies themselves. The country has already suffered decades of aggressions and attacks to its social structure, its way of living, which should be egalitarian, but has only benefited a privileged few to the detriment of the vast majority of Mexican people.

You can see this in every sphere of national life, and in every economic sector. The truth made evident by recent catastrophes is this: Mexico is a country of extreme poverty and inequality. When tragedies like these occur, they primarily affect those who have least, those who find themselves most disenfranchised, as if they weren't already facing enough issues and problems in their daily lives, thanks to poor opportunities and a lack of dignified, fair and decent jobs.

Natural phenomena have come to lift the lid on Mexico's inequalities and disadvantage, practically abject poverty, and they have impeded official attempts to put aid efforts in place for people, which appear ineffectual, desperate and even dramatic. Despite the fact that we're already in the eleventh hour of the current six-year administration, the government is trying to make it seem as though it really is doing something for the people, something it apparently neither wanted nor knew how to do for the last five years.

When we add to this the manipulation and mistakes of overblown social communication, aimed more at achieving the right ratings in the polls than the truth, then we have a population that continues to be left in the dark and deceived at these key moments. They should be told the truth, rather than fed fantasies of aid being chaotically distributed to towns and villages, often without any real thought, thus maintaining the images of social inequality which are so evident on our TV screens, even as they try to hide them or clean them up.



The key thing here is the boundless, dynamic and generous solidarity of the people for the people, which proves the assertion that at the end of day, you can only save yourselves. The number of people – men and women, adults and especially young people, including children and those with disabilities – who have thrown themselves into the efforts to rescue the thousands of people affected across the regions and the capital of the republic, suggests that we have a reserve of social energy and popular courage that must mean we will overcome this confrontation with mother nature, and with the human errors and abuses that continue to be committed.

This event shows that as we come to terms with everything that has happened and everything that lies in our way ahead, there can be no cowardice or shirking among the Mexican people. The masses have been the ones to answer the call of solidarity as rescuers of the injured; they can't be held back from the path to genuine economic, social and human redemption, when real life strikes. Quite the opposite – they will be stopped precisely if they don't fight as they should against those who would prevent their progress. And we say this from the front of a union of brave mining, metal and steelworkers, who have never hung their heads before their enemies, but who have always met attacks with a show of great strength and dignity, however powerful their aggressors are, or appear to be.

The extent of the social injustices which these natural tragedies have revealed are something that will have to be assessed once the storm has passed. Inequality has been central to the destruction of a society that had been headed somehow or other towards social justice, but which was betrayed and twisted by the politics of privilege, which have empowered dishonest governors and anti-working class politicians, as well as businessmen who are selfish and antisocial, divorced from any idea of generosity or social balance. This destruction of society has to stop here and now. And just as the 1985 earthquake gave people the motivation to organise themselves to fight for their redemption, which was felt so keenly in the capital of the republic, so now must we mobilise on a national scale.

It's inconceivable that the rebuilding of the country, in both material and political terms, can be left in the hands of those who have done far more to damage this nation than tremors or cyclones. To think like that we'd have to have failed to learn the lessons of history. Mexico needs profound, structural changes, and we deeply need to dispense with the current economic model, one which creates just a wealthy few, leaving a huge majority of people living in poverty. This change to the social and economic model of inequality is unavoidable if our progress is to become a reality, and to do so by peaceful means, with no need to resort to the violent measures that once paved the way to salvation and freedom at another time in our history.