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Mexico

Ayotzinapa, accelerator of the crisis of the state

- Features -

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Mexico seems to exist between terror and horror, always camouflaged by lies, dissimulation and the stage-managed set-ups of the army and the police, as well as of government agencies [1], which should be responsible for security, investigation and prosecution. From the massacre on June 30 this year at Tlatlaya in the state of Mexico of twenty-two alleged offenders by the army, a massacre falsely presented as a reaction to resistance to the police, to the murder of six people and the forced disappearance of forty-three students of the Normal School perpetrated by officers of the municipality of Iguala in Guerrero during the night of September 26, there has obviously been the same logic at work: abuse of power, arbitrary actions, disregard for human life and the belief that they could do anything, covered by an impunity that is at the heart of the Mexican regime.

The mass media, fundamentally linked to power and money, with the almost totalitarian tendency that characterizes them, invariably endorse the official stage-setting and implement their aim of deceiving and lulling to sleep a population that is apathetic and depressed. Up to the point where the facts eventually find their way to the surface, leaving in tatters the immense apparatus of moral contention that the media represent (Octavio Paz) and where official truths are shattered. It is then that the unexpected can happen, the unhoped for, what those at the top are always afraid of; the uncontrolled reaction of the citizens that we are, of those who are excluded from an oligarchic social order.

The straw that broke the camel's back, the feeling of just having had enough, an explosion of rage, the awakening from a nightmare, fear... many expressions have been used to explain the reactions of protest and condemnation, almost everywhere in the country, following the criminal aggression against members of a community that has always been proscribed and criminalized by the three levels of government (municipal, state and national): the students of the Rural Normal School (teacher training college) Isidro-Burgos of Ayotzinapa, the children of peasants, mostly students with few resources, the poor, with a tradition of struggle that goes back a long way and linked to one of the most longstanding student organizations, the Federation of Socialist Peasant Students of Mexico (MCFs).

Something snapped during that terrible night, whose unexpected repercussions have laid bare the profound crisis of all state institutions and the corruption of the political class, amalgamated not only with the financial oligarchy to which it is subject, but also with organized crime, which reveals the process of decomposition and degradation to which the unending political transition has led. The horror did not paralyze, but instead set in motion a society overwhelmed by grief as never before, outraged by the moral bankruptcy of those who claim to govern, and perhaps also to defend themselves against the possibility, ever more present, of becoming victims in their turn.

The facts

About 80 students, recently enrolled at the Normal School of Ayotzinapa, were organizing on Friday, September 26, a solidarity collection in order to go on October 2 to the capital, Mexico City, to attend the event commemorating the Tlatelolco Massacre [2]. As usual in Mexico for decades, the students left Chilpancingo in two buses, and arriving at Iguala at nine in the evening to continue their collection, they went to the coach station to negotiate with the driver.

On the way out, they fell into an ambush laid by municipal police, who fired without warning on the buses with heavy weapons. The students tried to flee, pursued by the police. Quickly blocked by a patrol, they got out of the vehicles to try to clear the way, and again came under fire. The police put in their official vehicles several young people that they had managed to catch and, according to some people, lined them up in the courtyard of the headquarters of the

municipal police detention centre at about 11 p.m. Later, on October 22, the prosecutor Jesús Murillo Karam would declare: "The group of students entered the headquarters of the Iguala police and shortly after they were removed from their custody by officers from the municipality of Cocula, whose deputy chief, César Nava, is in the pay of Guerreros Unidos ", one of the criminal gangs operating in this state. From there they took them to an unknown destination and according to other witnesses, handed them over to killers belonging to this gang.

The pursuit of the students and the scandal caused by the shooting attracted the attention of some media representatives, which led to an improvised press conference to inform people about the facts; but they in their turn were attacked, this time by masked individuals, apparently civilians. Another coach carrying a team of young football players also suffered an attack and ended up in a ditch, resulting in the death of the driver, a 14 year-old boy and a woman passing by in a taxi, whose driver was also injured.

The long night of terror (the attack lasted three hours) further resulted in the murder of two students, Daniel Gallardo and Solís Yosinavi Guerrero, while another, Aldo Gutiérrez, was left brain dead with a bullet in the head. Another student, Julio César Mondragón was later found thrown into the street, tortured and disfigured: there were 25 wounded, among whom was a student who, before being treated, was taken from a private hospital by the army along with his comrades. More than 50 students were listed as having disappeared, a figure that would later be clarified and reduced to 43, for whom a complaint for missing persons was filed with the specialized agency of the Public Ministry responsible for looking for missing persons, under the jurisdiction of the Attorney General of the state of Guerrero.

The facts, the possible motives and the actors responsible for these events would gradually become known; the official truth would gradually coincide with the version of the students who had been attacked, victims who had initially been criminalized by the various authorities of the state. The first thing that was said was that this had happened accidentally during a preventive intervention ordered by the mayor of Iguala, Jose Luis Abarca, to prevent the students from interrupting a formal meeting and feste (with dancing and all the rest) of his wife María de los Ángeles Pineda Villa, President of the Child Protection Agency (DIF). She was launching her campaign to succeed him in 2015 under the banner of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), to which both of them belong. However, Mayor Abarca lied the next day, asserting that he knew nothing of what had happened that night since he had spent it dancing and had been informed of what had happened by the press... He took the opportunity to accuse the students of having been "paid to foment unrest." However, there is no evidence to back up the assertion that the students had planned to interrupt any ceremony whatsoever; it had never occurred to them.

On Saturday, September 27, the state government headed by PRD (formerly PRI) governor Ángel Aguirre Rivero had no alternative but to act on what the State Attorney, Iñaki Cabrera Blanco, described as "police excesses", putting behind bars 22 police officers involved, under the charge of first degree murder once it was proved that they had fired their weapons. According to him, 30 weapons had been used, 137 cartridge cases were found and it was proven that police weapons were also used in the attack on the footballers, an attack that had previously been blamed on armed civilians. The Secretary for Public Security of Iguala, Flora Felipe Velázquez, was questioned without being detained. Days and weeks went by with a succession of facts, concealment and discoveries, which gave rise to a complicated scenario, not only a human tragedy but also a political crisis, and which concerned all the official actors who were implicated, directly or not, in the events of the night of horror, but all of whom bore some responsibility by omission, commission or neglect. The contradictions, the incompetence, the occult stories, the erratic behaviour of the government authorities, the military and various political actors - in an atmosphere of suspicion and complicity – saw them increasingly driven into a corner by a society which was about to burst on to the scene with an energy, anger, determination and scepticism that was unexpected, un-hoped for and truly explosive.

Although the army has been present everywhere since the previous government declared war, what drew attention was its apparent passivity. It was represented by the 27th infantry battalion and by special forces in Iguala, a unit that seemed to be absent when the attacks, which made a lot of noise, took place: its leader was present in the front row

at the official event of the municipality. The Secretary of National Defence, Salvador Cienfuegos Zepeda, even explained to the committee created by the Chamber of Deputies to investigate the case of Iguala that they had been deceived by the Secretary for Municipal Public Security, who had told them that nothing was happening. What is certain is that the only appearance of the military that night took place against the students themselves, in the hospital, which we have already mentioned. The parliamentary commission of inquiry found that the federal and state police had followed the students all the way from Chilpancingo to Iguala, keeping them under observation. Having heard shooting from the state police, they decided not to intervene. The responsibility of the army and police, both federal and state, is clear; they did not intervene when they were confronted with criminal attacks against the civilian population, in this case the students of Ayotzinapa who were being pursued by a mixture of municipal police and hired killers, and who were murdered and forcibly disappeared.

Governor Ángel Aguirre allowed Abarca to resign during an official meeting of his council. At the same time as Abarca and his wife took flight, he also allowed the Secretary for Municipal Security, who had been questioned without being arrested, to flee; this was despite previous accusations of drug trafficking and murders of activists, for which they were suspected of being responsible. Pushed onto the defensive, Aguirre denied having any responsibility for these events and spread information about the corruption of Abarca and his links with drug trafficking, saying that an investigation was underway. He announced a reward of one million pesos for any information leading to the location of the 43; he hung on to his position, under increasing challenge (but he was defended ferociously by the national leadership of PRD); he offered to organize a referendum on his mandate but met with no response from the social organizations, which demanded his resignation and impeachment, and it was not until October 23 - under threat of dismissal – that he became resigned to giving up his office in exchange for a negotiated impunity.

On Tuesday, September 30, for the first time, President Enrique Peña Nieto spoke of "institutional weakness", but refused to intervene in the case of Iguala, considering it to be the responsibility of the state authorities. He seemed not to want to cause problems his friend Governor Aguirre or for the leadership of the PRD, his ally in the Pact for Mexico, with which he was trying to re-establish the rule of the PRI and to implement structural reforms, state policies and a vision of the country that could ensure the long-term restoration of the "perfect dictatorship" [3]. Despite the evidence of involvement in organized crime - which the federal government claims to be fighting against - the intervention of state security forces in the murder and the forced disappearance of 43 students, which is a crime against humanity - the government of Peña Nieto was content to mandate the Prosecutor General of the Republic and the officials of the Secretariat of the Government to contribute to the inquiry by the government of the state of Guerrero, which was, moreover, also called into question.

The contempt of President Peña Nieto for students from a rural teachers' college that all governments had wanted to abolish showed great insensitivity, associated with a discriminatory attitude. He sinned by omission when confronted by a serious case of violation of the human rights of a besieged and criminalized community, which would within the space of a few weeks compromise not only his credibility, but in a general manner the legitimacy of all state institutions.

On 3 October, we could see filtering in the media the intervention of the drug cartels, Los Rojos and Guerreros Unidos, and the state prosecutor opened a case for the crime of forced disappearance against Mayor Jose Luis Abarca and a group of police who were accused, in association with known criminals, of illegally depriving the 43 of their liberty. We saw emerging publicly stories of municipal officials being linked to drug trafficking, although the national government was slow to make public the links of José Luis Abarca with the Beltran Leyva cartel, which had separated from Guerreros Unidos, a cartel well known to the National Centre for Investigation and Security (CISEN). A few days later, the Attorney General of the Republic officially designated as those having given orders for the disappearance Abarca, his wife and Felipe Flores, who in addition to being police chief emerged as an active member of Guerreros Unidos, a cartel which received between two and three million pesos per month [4] from the municipality.

Probably taking advantage of the flood of information – which did not cease – on the complicity that he had known about for a long time without ever having taken any kind of action, the Public Prosecutor only decided to take over the Iguala case on the evening of Saturday, 4 October.

Thus, almost ten days after the police attack against the students and the enforced disappearance of 43 of them, the government of Peña Nieto took stock of the seriousness of the case, deplored the "shocking, painful and unacceptable" facts, involved what is called the "Security Cabinet" and dispatched the recently created elite force, the Gendarmerie, to carry out public security tasks. The municipal police of Iguala were disarmed and transferred to the sixth military region in Mezaquiahuac in the state of Tlaxcala, for evaluation and training. And soon the same thing happened in 17 municipalities, including one in the state of México, Ixtapan de la Sal, which is also administered by the PRD. The Prosecutor General's Office announced, on October 9, that it was investigating Abarca's wife, who had until then been candidate for mayor of Iguala and for the National Council of the PRD, because the authorities realized that the whole family (father, mother and brothers) was part of organized crime, and eventually... Jesús Murillo Karam, Procurator of the Attorney General's Office, and Tomás Zerón, director of the Agencia de Criminal Investigation Agency, found themselves responsible for the investigations, "forced to mobilize the state's investigative apparatus, "the full force of the state" to find those responsible for the disappearances. They took responsibility for dealing with the case and for negotiating with the families of the disappeared and with the students. Finally "the full force of the state", as those who govern us like to say, was set in motion in search of the missing students. Clandestine mass graves were discovered, filled with corpses whose disappearance had never surprised them, who had never been looked for and who were still not identified, which of course is improbable and highlights the incompetence and the complicity of the military and the state intelligence services. In fact, since the beginning of October, they had begun to "discover" the first clandestine graves, allegedly found thanks to the statements of several of those who had been arrested (police as well as figures of organized crime). Although we cannot ignore the pressure that was exercised by the intervention and the mobilization of 550 community guards of the Unión de People and Organizations of the state of Guerrero (UPOEG) who combed the region of Iguala in search of the students. In mid-October, the prosecution made an initial assessment of its intervention: 300 federal agents were involved in the search for the students; 46 people had been arrested, including 22 policemen from Iguala, 14 from Cocula, and 10 civilians of Guerreros Unidos. Once the actual perpetrators of the disappearances had been arrested, what was missing was those who gave the orders; the prosecution announced that it was preparing an arrest warrant for José Luis Abarca and the head of the municipal police for organized crime; there was hardly any investigation of Abarca's wife, and none of the bodies found so far in the mass graves was that of a student.

While all this was going on, the priest Alejandro Solalinde, a well-known defender of Central American migrants, director of the Hermanos in el Camino [\[5\]](#) reception centre, announced that he had learned that the students had been murdered and incinerated.

The motives

Let us be clear: what catalyzed the conflictual process that was underway, following the murderous ambush set by the police for the Ayotzinapa students and the disappearance of 43 of them, was the response of the students themselves and of the families of those murdered and missing. With the support of social organizations and human rights groups they rallied around the slogan: "They took them alive, we want to see them alive!" This symbolized the great struggle against enforced disappearances in Mexico, which has never ceased to strike many opponents of the authoritarian regime, since the time of the dirty war initiated by the massacre of 2 October, 1968 in Tlatelolco.

In fact, we did not have long to wait for the demand for the reappearance of the 43 students and for the putting on trial of those responsible for the crime, those responsible for the facts, those who took the decision. The horror and stupefaction provoked by the night of terror gave way to indignation and anger. Demonstrations, meetings, the

occupation (and even the burning down) of town halls and public offices began to take place in the main towns of the state of Guerrero, bringing together many social organizations. On October 1, at a huge mobilization in Chilpancingo, the state capital, students called for support from all over the country. On October 2, in Mexico City, the demonstration commemorating the 1968 movement and the Tlatelolco massacre took place under the sign of Ayotzinapa, which subsequently became known as the state aggression of Iguala. In many institutions of secondary and higher education, strikes broke out in solidarity and a national mobilization was prepared for 8 October. From spontaneous demonstrations, which took place in many places as an expression of discontent and anger at the violence and impunity of politicians and organized crime (the amalgam between the two was being increasingly confirmed in various ways), students moved on to coordination and to the organization of a plan of struggle, linking social resistance and voices of protest of all sorts and in all the media, demanding justice and the reappearance alive of the missing students.

The general feeling was that the crime of Iguala could have been avoided if the various judicial bodies had taken seriously the complaints against Abarca concerning the assassination of several social activists, including members of his own party, and the evidence of corruption of the political class – of all parties - and their open links with various organized criminal gangs. This was how there began to spread the denunciation of the omissions of the officials of the prosecutors' office and the governments to which it was responsible (state and federal). But just as important was the denunciation of political parties whose borders are blurred and which are decomposed, sold at auction in exchange for power and money, of which they have their hands full, whether it comes from the public purse or from the criminal underworld.

The police attacks, the six murders, the many who were wounded and the forced disappearance of the 43 appeared in the eyes of many people from all walks of life as a product of the ancestral impunity enjoyed by politicians, civil servants and bosses of the legal as well as the informal economy, including those in charge of organized crime. Widespread social corruption, which has developed over the decades as a culture of authoritarian power and as a condition of an economy unequal in the extreme; an authoritarian regime backed up by a state oligarchy resulting from the electoral reforms produced by the crisis of the state; an extremely unjust social order based on exploitation, plunder and the exclusion of the vast majority of society, whose rights are restricted and which is considered as suspect: it is all that which is the precondition and the basis for the arrogance, the abuse of abuse of power and the impunity, and which may explain the decision to murder supposed troublemakers and to make them disappear.

That is why no one, outside of certain circles of privileged power, disputed the fact that we were dealing with crimes of state, whether it be murder with impunity of innocent people by agents of the state (in this case the municipal police on the orders of an organ of constitutional authority of government, the municipality) or non-assistance to civilians endangered the federal and state policies and by the army, or whether we are dealing with the forced disappearance of 43 students, a crime committed by municipal police assisted by hired killers, which clearly constitutes a crime against humanity.

If the possible motive for the punitive action that was ordered by a public official in the exercise of his functions may seem absurd, trivial and frivolous, the reasons for the social response and the tidal wave that continued to expand in the country and in various parts of the world have to do with what is at the foundation of human life: dignity, anger against injustice and the unlimited abuse of power.

The logics which confront each other

In this process, there were two logics that overlapped and contradicted each other. The first, that of the students, the families and generally all those who were in solidarity with them, organized or not, who were shocked by the horrific violence and who demanded the reappearance alive of the 43 students and the punishment of the guilty. To achieve

this they began building and organizing a broad, powerful process of the mobilization of social sectors, to which was added, quite unexpectedly, all kinds of individual or collective forms of expression, creative initiatives of denunciation: all of this unleashed a wave of protest which does not have ceased to grow. The whole movement has converged not only in solidarity with the students of Ayotzinapa, but also in rejection of the government and those who occupy it, towards whom they have manifested a distrust which has been confirmed and strengthened day by day because of the erratic behaviour, the incompetence and the complicity that are clearly evident in the strategy implemented by the government of Peña Nieto. The anxiety and fear spread by the great war that has continued for sixty years have been transformed into resistance, denunciation, criticism, seeking justice and democracy... which do not always materialize. It is a logic of mobilization, not only of a struggle against the violence that surrounds us, but also of a search for truth, justice and democracy, freed from the corruption that breeds impunity and reproduces it. Everything seemed to indicate that we were witnessing a movement that would last, even though with rhythms and perspectives that were uncertain.

On the other hand, the logic of the government of President Peña Nieto followed a line: "limit the damage". It is the logic of power, which reproduces itself and hides away, which seeks to maintain order by depoliticizing, by ensuring the resignation and the submission of the excluded through the media on its payroll, which spreads propaganda for a deceptive way of life and assistance programmes for the potential clienteles of the parties, of the social base of the state. A logic of exclusion which criminalizes and proscribes nonconformists, dissidents and rebels, such as the students and teachers of Guerrero, which despises those who do not share the way of life that is their goal. The logic of power is based on negotiation between the various fractions of a political class which has become one, colourless, undifferentiated, but which is still grouped into fractions, into mafias, which take the name of parties and which are outrageously financed and reinforced from public funds. A logic, therefore, that at bottom is based on the complex and intertwined complicities of an enlarged political class, a state oligarchy, which argues over posts, spaces and resources within a fundamental strategy that leads them all to converge in defence of the social and political order that benefits them and allows them to aspire to be welcomed into the financial oligarchy that really controls everything. They have of course contradictions and interests that make them "oppose" one another at all levels, in all spaces, in all markets, legal or illegal, including by means of violence, as is obvious. But that is precisely the contradictory essence of the logic of power.

It is because of this logic that governs state power that the government of Peña Nieto allowed local forces in the state of Guerrero to do as they liked, leaving his allies to sort things out among themselves. Forgetful, negligent and contemptuous, it was only when the clamour rose and became general in all milieux and social groups - intellectual, artistic, religious, etc. - and began to spread everywhere, a clamour that was reproduced internationally, in society as well as among representatives of governments (such as the United States), institutions (such as the EU and the UN), spurred on largely by International human rights organizations, that the Mexican government intervened. It did so with the evident intention of blocking the unpredictable and autonomous movement of rupture, simultaneously trying to take advantage of the crisis for an upcoming election process and to reunite and affirm the power of its party.

The strategy was to take back the initiative, to approach the parents of those missing and the students who were leading the movement, offering "the full force of the state" for the enquiry and for the investigations that were too erratic and unconvincing. To limit the damage by dragging out the conflict, with the intention that its interlocutors would regain confidence in the government, feel that they were being listened to and even protected; and that in this way the protest would wear itself out and dissolve, as always happens. There would then only remain the confused memory of lives torn apart, of figures added to the tens of thousands of dead and missing during these years of the so-called unfinished war against organized crime. Very late, ten days after the crimes, the government even recognized the forced disappearance of the students. But in practice, in the charges against the dozens of detainees, there never appeared the charge of forced disappearance. Great efforts were made to look for clandestine graves, which turned up everywhere, but they did not even try to find the students alive, and finally did so only under the pressure of the parents and the movement.

The logic of mobilization, nevertheless, could not be stopped and on the contrary continued to grow tumultuously, breaking out everywhere, in the most unexpected sectors. To the local demonstrations in Guerrero were added the first national mobilizations on October 8 and 22, when more than twenty regions of the Republic held protest actions, the largest taking place in San Cristobal de las Casas, with more than twenty thousand members of the support bases of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), who came from their communities. From that moment on, the demonstrations in the capital of the Republic broke with the inertia and the hesitation caused by the successive governments of the PRD, which had sought to demobilize and criminalize citizens trapped between the clientelist networks of the assistance programmes, the political repression - refined with the tactics of *encapsulamiento* [6] and arbitrary arrests of protesters - and the intolerance of the so-called "modern left", which continues to criminalize protests. The most optimistic forecasts were exceeded, for example, on Wednesday, October 29, when about 90,000 people demonstrated late into the evening in Mexico City, and again on November 5 with about 120,000 protesters who marched to Zócalo [7]. The school and university students - many of them engaged in repeated solidarity strikes - became the backbone of the broad and varied popular mobilizations, building organizational links thanks to a national coordinating body that began to discuss the long-term strategy of the movement. Citizens' organizations did not fail to join the movement and to play their role in structuring and broadening the protest. The days of protest in fact attained a national level, having moreover an echo in many cities of the world, through Global Acción por Ayotzinapa, leading to a series of mobilizations demanding the reappearance, alive, of the 43 missing students and the indictment and trial of all those responsible.

The logic of the government, therefore, underestimated the logic of mobilization and failed in its damage limitation project. In fact the government of Enrique Peñón Nieto was increasingly cornered and besieged, nationally and internationally. Its real incompetence or its negligence, probably coming from its shoddy compromises and complicities, did not allow it to understand the change in the state of mind of numerous social groups, and not only young people. The absence of effective results accentuated people's indignation and anger and the increasingly widespread denunciation of its ineffectiveness. On October 24, the parents of the students, who were in contact with the government commission, decided to break off the dialogue and the relations with the prosecution, due to the lack of results and the announcement that a line of inquiry had identified alleged links of the students with organized crime, which was seen as an attempt to criminalize the victims and the Normal School itself, which was the object of attacks and contempt from the official forces. The parents demanded a direct meeting with the president, which took place on October 29. Peñón made a commitment to respect the rights, the honour and the reputation of the missing students, obviously abandoning the line of criminalization that the prosecutor had indicated, guaranteeing the trial, the end of impunity, assistance to victims, reparations for the moral damage inflicted and support for the despised system of rural normal schools. At the same time he promised a technical assistance agreement with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), as requested by the parents.

The meeting was the subject of a national television programme where the president delivered his message and where there was expressed the dissatisfaction and the disbelief of the relatives of the disappeared students, the lawyers and the students who participated. Faced with the demand to look for living students rather than dead bodies, the Search Plan was reformulated and the joint commission for monitoring and information, made up of investigating agents of the prosecutor's office and the Ministry of the Interior, was created. Finally, facilities were offered to Argentine experts to take charge of the search and the identification of remains that were found, because they were the only ones in whom the families had confidence.

But these outpourings did not last long. The divisions between the various fractions of the political class accelerated, and even the spokespersons of the privileged sectors demanded that a solution be found to the political and social crisis, which was in danger of affecting the economic recovery. The demobilizing strategy of the government failed, and contrary to its intentions, acted as a spur to resistance and to denunciations of its incompetence; the discredit of state institutions became widespread among social networks, and even the media in the pay of the government were alarmed about "ungovernability". As the 43x43 Movement pointed out, arriving on the Plaza de la Constitución, "the present state no longer serves society", given the situation of national emergency due to the insecurity that people experience in Mexico.

The government then seemed to change its tactics or its strategy and to stop dragging out indefinitely the investigation with aim of demobilizing people through weariness and lack of results; it seemed to be hastily trying to find a way out that would enable it to finish with the case once and for all. It was a kind of headlong rush that it now launched into, implementing a shock tactic aimed at demoralizing and dismaying not only the families and the mobilized social sectors, but the whole of the population, the whole of society, by resorting to the "policy of fear" with which Felipe Calderón Hinojosa [8] sought to paralyze and govern the country.

The headlong rush

On November 5, one of the biggest days of national and international mobilization, with more than 80 educational institutions on strike for the reappearance alive of the 43 students, the Abarcas were victims of what many people considered to have been an operation stage-managed by the prosecutor's office. (Were they arrested in Veracruz or in Iztapalapa? Did they surrender from weariness and disillusionment?): this was the indictment of the former PRD mayor for the murders, which had been denounced and remained unpunished, of three members of the Union Popular de Guerrero, in addition to his links with the Guerreros Unidos gang. Not a word about the forced disappearance of the 43. His wife was kept in custody for investigation. On Friday, November 7, the Attorney General of the Republic, Murillo Karam, in a press conference broadcast live by all the means of communication in the pay of the government (and then repeated ad infinitum), "informed" us that, according to the testimonies of three killers of Guerreros Unidos, it appeared that the 43 missing students had been executed and their bodies burned and reduced to ashes in a municipal landfill in Cocula. The blaze lasted more than ten hours without anyone noticing (not even the armed forces, which are always on the alert) and then, once their remains had cooled, they were thrown into a nearby river. A real horror show, with alleged videotaped testimony and detailed statements about the supposed transportation, killing and incineration of the students, all this in order to shock and stupefy everyone; these facts were really unprecedented, even during the worst of the dirty war of the past century. In conclusion, the government repeated the information that the priest Solalinde had provided nearly a month before, without "the full force of the state" being sufficient to find up to then traces or remains of such a fire on the site that had now been rediscovered and disguised as a crime scene. Murillo Karam, tired out, concluded his laboured statement by trying to counter the reactions of the families and the movement: "They are dead, but for the federal government, from the point of view of the law they are still missing."

It is not necessary to go into detail concerning the almost universal rejection of the statements of the prosecution; the absurdities that it contained merely highlighted the haste and lack of imagination, the incompetence and the inability of the government to carry out effective research and to prosecute crimes that still remained unpunished. Ten thousand soldiers, sailors, federal police and experts had gone over the area with a fine toothcomb, had crisscrossed and flown over it hundreds of times, had searched lakes and rivers dozens of times, all in vain. Everything seemed to be a chronicle of an outcome announced by the government from the start and only manipulated at its convenience. Not only did the families and the students reject and condemn the outcome that the government sought to impose, but they reiterated their demand and their fight for the reappearance alive of all the disappeared, thus reviving the process of mobilization that will not end until we really find them. Fresh actions began, to give continuity and strength to a struggle that had no reason to stop, such as the three caravans of families, which from November 14 set off towards the north and south of the country, covering many states, as well as the rest of Guerrero, and they culminated on November 20, the anniversary of the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution, in three great demonstrations which started off from three key points of Mexico City: the Angel of Independence, the Monument to the Revolution and the Square of Three Cultures in Tlatelolco.

With at their head the families of the missing students, these three demonstrations swelled as they pursued their route, until they spilled over onto the main thoroughfares of the historic centre and were transformed into a mega-march that became the axis of the fourth Global Day for Ayotzinapa, which succeeded in involving in Mexico City 79 high schools on strike, 114 universities and higher education institutions throughout the country, telephone

workers, members of the Mexican Electrical Workers' Union; teachers, intellectuals, artists, housewives and all kinds of people from different social sectors and backgrounds; all of them flocked to express their solidarity and their demand for justice and for the police to produce, alive, the 43 disappeared. A hundred and twenty cities in the country and at least 30 cities in the world were shaken by the anger caused by pain for the disappeared, but also by the rejection of those in government who were responsible.

It was impossible to count the participants in the huge demonstration of the three caravans (200,000?), because the turbulent waves converged on a Zócalo square which filled and emptied as the groups arrived and then spread out to other streets, continuing to demonstrate.

The logic of power that dominates not only the government of Peña Nieto but the municipality, also run by the PRD, of the capital, in the hands of the para-PRI supporter Miguel Ángel Mancera, sought to deactivate the mobilizations before the demonstration, encouraging shopkeepers of the historic centre to close their shops and install barriers, gates and grills. Offensive and useless, these barriers only revealed the official fear of demonstrations by the rebellious society, whereas previous days of action had shown that the demonstrations were peaceful and orderly when the police kept out of the way. To empty and minimize the protest, and above all, to dislocate it by appealing to the uncertainty of fear and insecurity, both of the organs of power, governmental and municipal, unleashed at the end of the demonstration a repressive crackdown that was completely arbitrary and indiscriminate (against entire families, journalists and witnesses who were filming the attacks) to clear Constitution Square by force.

The governments of the PRI and the PRD thus flagrantly and cynically violated human rights and their own legality, which they utilize as they see fit, relying on their impunity, immune to the hysteria, protected by the means of communication in their pay. It was precisely the Secretary for Public Security of the city, Jesús Rodríguez Almeida, who launched against activists the accusation of plotting assassinations, which was used to indict illegally demonstrators who had been picked up at random, and whose release was added as an immediate demand. Thus, all collective actions of protest run the risk of criminalization and repression, an old strategy of the state to demobilize society and try to impose by force a sense of frightened resignation.

Degradation and the crisis

Ayotzinapa revealed, in the space of a few weeks, the crisis of state institutions that had lost all credibility, the political and social decomposition of a rotten and distant system, acting above society and against it. The political class, the oligarchy of money and the criminal mafia had become intermingled, thanks to countless channels of communication and complicities that were based on a kind of pact of impunity that has always prevailed in Mexico, admittedly with some adjustments, depending on changing actors and conditions. The different governments and political actors of the state did their utmost to present Ayotzinapa and the terror in Iguala as a local affair, with local actors and local consequences. But in reality the ramifications of this took on a national and world dimension, because of its character as a crime against humanity. By omission or commission, as they say in the legal jargon of a legality that does not exist in Mexico, the three levels of government, the state as a whole, by which is meant the Congress of the Union, the judicial authority, the state congresses and the legal political parties are all responsible, co-participants, accomplices in the affair of Ayotzinapa, which has overflowed everywhere across the nation. We see reproduced there the same criminal practices, the widespread corruption, the impunity for those at the top and the criminalization of all others, who are excluded, exploited, despoiled, proscribed, in their own country, our country, once again colonized and dominated by voracious and unscrupulous oligarchies.

The Pact for Mexico, conceived by Enrique Peña Nieto, whose representativeness and institutional legitimacy are due to an electoral victory that was achieved through traffic in poverty and by buying votes; the opposition parties have become, as in former times *peleles partidos* (puppet parties). The structural reforms, which are totally subject to

the logic of the free market, have not failed to prepare fundamental changes in the country, which is in a state of complete and utter subordination to big global capital and to the imperial powers that promote devastating capitalism. But Ayotzinapa shows the fragility of this process, conducted by minorities who lack representativeness and social legitimacy. They represent only themselves, and especially their changing clienteles, who are fed with crumbs from public funds disguised as social programmes. It is an ambitious and tyrannical minority, with no other purpose than to control the country and to govern it, mafia style, for its own benefit. These people have built an authoritarian regime that claims to be democratic, but in which they are the only ones who participate, they who see themselves, without any foundation, as representatives of everyone; the legality of the country has always been of that sort, manipulated, subordinated to a hierarchy whose summit continues to be the president and whose roots lie in capital that is now also in direct competition for political power. A regime of semi-legality that never became a state governed by law, and which for that reason remains lacking in effective institutional rules, without impartial justice and full and complete freedom for all the citizens that we have never succeeded in being, because they have robbed us of public affairs, they have monopolized politics.

But Ayotzinapa but also symbolizes and announces what some have called a reawakening of society, which is nothing other than popular exasperation with abuse of power, violence, corruption, impunity and everything that has gone to form a perverse national political culture, clientelist and exclusive. It reveals the subterranean processes which, going against the current, have unceasingly produced multiple, continual and sometimes recurring resistance to oppression and discrimination, against exploitation, despoilment and abandonment. Students, peasants, indigenous peoples, but also teachers, workers who have survived the disaster of neoliberal precarity, neighbours, housewives, young people, women, intellectuals, artists, migrants ... All of these people, in ways that are very varied and sometimes unexpected, resist, defend their lives, their culture, their threatened common property, their demands. A vast resistance, a veritable daily revolt, sometimes underground, in secret, which has continued during all these years of the offensive of neoliberal capitalism, began to coalesce under the sign of Ayotzinapa because of the terror and state crimes of which the students were victims, but also because of the resistance, of the dignity in the struggle that the students have demonstrated; and they continue to give heart to many others who, in ways that cannot be foreseen, will join in, with their anger, their solidarity and their intelligence.

The image of a saviour that the media and the oligarchies of the world have fabricated for President Peña Nieto because of his appeals to his supposed rivals and because of the structural reforms that he has carried out on the back of society and of the country, has collapsed under the shock waves produced by Ayotzinapa. The demand for his resignation on grounds of incompetence and irresponsibility has become general and it will be to say the least difficult for him to regain any credibility in a society that repudiates him, and perhaps also within the privileged milieux who pushed him to the fore and supported him. All the parties and politicians have exhausted their credit; all of them are responsible for the decomposition of society, despite pretended differences, dividing lines and their behaviour from time to time during the present conflict. But it is especially the PRD that has collapsed, because Ayotzinapa brutally proved what was already indisputable: the abandonment of the old principles and practices of the Left, its effacement as a party linked to the social layers that had given birth to it 25 years ago and its transformation into a conglomeration of factions of the apparatus, mafias grouped around perverse interests and allegiances, who administer unscrupulously an electoral machine as if it was a franchise in the race for positions and the for the auctions where the booty of public money is divided up. Little by little, arrogant, autistic, it has taken its distance from society, which it considers only as a public of which sections can possibly be recruited through corrupt and clientelist practices (including the buying and selling of votes). The social sectors, individuals and communities who had given birth to it and created its electoral influence during the 1988 civil insurrection have also abandoned the PRD, disappointed, now without hope of influencing legislation or of governments that benefit all of society, and not only those on high.

The behaviour of the leadership and the National Council of the PRD during the crisis caused by the attack and forced disappearance of students by one of their well-known activists, who was a mayor and a parliamentary candidate for deputy, and his wife, a PRD candidate in the process of succeeding him and a member of the National Council of the party, clearly exposed the negligence, the complicity and the omissions that have been just one

example of the decomposition of the party. The same goes for the defence and protection of the governor of the state of Guerrero, brought to power by the PRD, although he had been throughout his life a member of the PRI and a former deputy governor, who had been publicly accused of the murder of dozens of PRD activists. The leaders of the PRD, "dissidents" included, are constantly accused by society of moral bankruptcy and of connivance with those responsible for a state crime. What is involved here is not the downfall of the hegemonic current, linked to the present national government, but the collapse and decomposition of a project that for a certain time claimed to be on the left. There is no doubt it will be a slow death, which its founder, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, is trying to speed up, seeking also to limit the damage. On November 17 Cárdenas called for the resignation of the national leadership, which had just assumed its functions following an electoral process characteristic of the practices of the old PRI, before himself resigning, belatedly, from the party that he had long since lost.

To be continued

It is difficult to know the road that will be taken, both by the movement for the disappeared of Ayotzinapa and by the government, as well as the political class, in a crisis that does not seem to be finding solutions. The families and the students who organize and lead the movement will no doubt continue to demand the reappearance alive of the 43 and it does not seem, on the contrary, that there is any reflux of the wave of indignation against the government's version of events, which is being increasingly questioned and taken apart because of its contradictions, and its absence of coherence and credibility. The mobilizations are hardening and we can see the beginning of it being infiltrated by the police; this is clearly aimed at preparing the conditions for a possible crackdown by the government, which up until now has held back because it has been put on the defensive. The media on its payroll have forgotten the acceptable motivations of the demonstrations that led to exceptional and unexpected weeks and have unleashed once again, as always, a criminalizing offensive aimed at disheartening some protesters, disorganizing the protest and also preparing a repressive way out of the crisis, announced moreover by President Peña Nieto on his return from his long-awaited trip to China.

It may be that society has begun to demobilize, to be concerned by other things, to moderate its practical solidarity, but it is difficult for it to go back to what it was before, once it has been made aware and politicized by events that dynamised, moved and mobilized many people, even if they did not take part actively in the movement in one way or another. The time has not come to draw a balance sheet or to change the orientation of the movement. Kick them all out? The feeling of exasperation and criticism that accompanies the loss of confidence in state institutions and those who control them, make it difficult to support a so-called solution whose objective would be the resignation of the president and his government, in order, in fact, to win the subsequent election and replicate the same practices, the same policies that all the parties have never ceased to implement and will continue to implement. The process leading to an outcome favourable to the movement is perhaps linked to the resolution of the crisis of the state which has not come to an end, but only within the perspective of rebuilding the power of society from below, in other words the building of fundamental alternatives to the capitalist social order and the kind of oligarchic democracy which prevails.

On Saturday, November 15, the caravan of the families and students of Ayotzinapa, which had crisscrossed the south of the country to spread and encourage the struggle for the reappearance alive of the 43 and for justice, arrived in Caracol de Oventik, in Chiapas, where they were received by the Zapatista commandants and five thousand bases of support. They shared their pain and their experiences, and the prospect that many of those who supported the movement might abandon it and forget. But also the need to resist, to persist in the struggle even in unfavourable conditions, to unite the pain, the rebellion, the anger, but also to build from the bottom up an alternative way of life, a real long-term transformation.

The students are continuing their actions and their organization throughout the country, and have agreed to create on

December 5 a National Student Coordinating Committee (CNE), while in the state of Guerrero the peoples are resisting, trying also to exercise self-government - with reference to the Juntas de Buen Gobierno (Councils of Good Government) of the Zapatistas - and they created on November 30 five popular municipal committees (Ayutla de los Libres, Tlapa, Acapulco, San Luis Acatlán and Teconapa), with 20 more to come. This is being done precisely as an organized response of the people who, since the state attack in Iguala, find themselves at "a point of no return, articulating a movement to change things in this country once and for all" , in the words of Omar Garc a, of the student committee of the Rural Normal School of Ayotzinapa.

Tlalpan, Mexico City, November 30, 2014

[1] Mexico is a federal republic. We will use the term "state" to designate regional entities, and "national", "federal" or "government" to designate national institutions.

[2] On October 2, 1968 the Mexican army opened fire on students gathered in the Square of the Three Cultures in Tlatelolco in Mexico City. The exact number of victims is still not known precisely. The event abruptly ended more than three months of student protests against the "socialist" government of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Supporters of the student movement estimate that there were between 200 and 300 dead among the protesters: government sources say "4 dead, 20 injured"!

[3] The title of a political comedy that in 2014 broke all box office records in Mexican cinemas; it was based on real facts of corruption and media and political manipulation of public opinion (including the case mounted against Florence Cassez). The title is a quote from Mario Vargas Llosa: "Mexico is a perfect dictatorship (...) that of an irremovable party."

[4] Equivalent to between  ,~120,000 and  ,~180 000

[5] "Brothers on the road"

[6] This is a tactic of encirclement and isolation of groups of demonstrators by forces of repression, similar to the "kettling" tactics of the British police.

[7] The commonly used name for the Plaza de la Constituci n, one of the largest squares in the world, in the heart of the capital

[8] President of Mexico from 2006 to 2012, belonging to the right-wing National Action Party (PAN)