

President Misael Pastrana is, no doubt, the most important political thinker in Spanish America to take up the subject of the Ecology. His intuitions on Environmental Awareness led him to design the first “Code of Natural Resources” in Spanish America. He later became a champion of global world environmental protection and promotion during his term as President of the UN World Environmental Award, which was in turn heightened by the participation of the Sasakawa Foundation.

He was an advocate of “deep Ecology”, that is, of all those who believe they must “Save the Earth”, which means, above all, developing a “culture of the human species”, being convinced that “no amount of life can oppose the quality of life”, nurturing the certainty that biodiversity must be preserved, and enriching wisdom by discovering that the well-being and blooming of life is of great value in itself and it must lie at the heart of the political will to establish “environmental justice”.

Ecology was the key to his humanistic conception, to his work as a thinker and to his government policy. He was convinced that poverty and uncontrolled consumption are the environment’s biggest enemies; he knew that “ecology” (that means caring for the house) does not oppose “economy” (that

means the administration of the house) and he understood very well, as a great admirer of Mac Luhan, that the first effective “globalization” was created by nature itself, by placing us all on the same planet and that our biggest challenge is to discover and enrich the conviction that we have a “common destiny”.

That is why he welcomed each great moment when his “interlocutors” took important steps in the right direction. Rachel Carlson with her book “Silent Spring”, the “Club of Rome” with its reflections on the limits to growth, the Brundtland Commission with its magnificent writings on “sustainable” and “lasting development” –said Pastrana-, as well as during his conversations with Mauricio Strong, Haran Asmaz, Gilbert White, Sir Peter Scott and the unforgettable Capitan Cousteau whom he honored and had the honor of awarding the World Environmental Award.

He used to say it was necessary to prevent mankind’s “New Holocaust” and it was under such perspective and mission that he analyzed and thought about the diagnosis and commitments enshrined in the so-called “Agenda 21” that emerged from the Conference on the Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

As a politician, President Pastrana was aware that he spoke from a privileged part of the world, from Spanish America, that region that holds 23% of arable land, 12% of croplands, 17% of cattle-grazing lands; 23% of forestlands; 46% of tropical jungle lands; 31% of surface waters eligible for consumption, 19% of Planet Earth's hydroelectric potential, and from the certainty of living in a country –Colombia- that together with Ecuador, Peru, Brazil and Mexico are ranked among the world's top 10 leaders in Biodiversity.

Back then, from this privileged and own scenario, his voice and personality rose warning that if pollution were to continue, then the biosphere risked losing its ability to sustain life; from this scenario he echoed the voice of those who preferred “better laws” to “more laws” on environmental protection; back then he proposed “creating awareness around the community's ownership of the environment”, for such is the only way to respond effectively to the cultural curse whereby “that which belongs to everyone belongs to no one”.

In so doing he anticipated the ecological concept that “global commons “ express a “new life ethics” and surprised his fellow countrymen by stating –and actually enshrining in his

country's political charter- “the constitutional principle of the Ecological Role of Ownership”.

It was back then that he devoted his greatest efforts to writing and disseminating ideas about ecological awareness; he further stated that it is not poverty but rather indifference and ignorance that are responsible for environmental disasters.

He believed in an education where love for life is expressed in love for the land that will save us if we take efficient care of it; he believed the Mass Media could do much for survival the day it decided to “side with the land”; he believed the key to a real economy is to reconcile with ecology without delay; he believed peace was people living in harmony with each other and with nature, and he would beam with pleasure whenever he heard someone say that globalization would bring with it the “environmental citizenry”, the testimony that our generations did not live in vain, that we did not live in vain.

Knowing that his stay on earth was coming to an end, he nonetheless traveled to Europe just a few weeks before passing away to fulfill the mission of delivering the “World Environmental

Award” because he knew he had to be true to the “New World”, that “New World” to which he devoted his life and efforts.