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Many institutions speak of “art policies” even with the support that banks and cultural organizations of various kinds give to artistic-cultural activities, but these are definitely “policies of economic institutions”.

In the middle of the 20th century, as a result of the revolution of 1944, the *Dirección de las Bellas Artes* (Fine Arts Department) was created in Guatemala. These acted according to the exchange program and support to the works of national and foreign artists: such exchanges, sponsorship and scholarships were considered as “features” that defined the artistic projection **“without the political party interests”** that today burden and distort the function, interests and lines of art.

Characteristic of these institutions that promote and stimulate artists and free creation, was the support that was evident through positive activities such as the permanent contest of science, literature and fine arts “*15 de septiembre*” (September 15th) resulting in the

acquisition of works, both award-winning, as well as various exhibitions that were presented, and forming a very valuable art gallery, now owned by the nation.

In this situation, art, with some exceptions, reflected the artistic field and its variety of expressions through different schools, without being expressions directed by interests other than those of the artists themselves, to such extent that those who did not agree with the way the contest was run simply did not participate¹.

¹ An example of this was the absence of the artists who had already presented their work on the September 15th contest of 1971, but who participated in the contest of the students of the National School of Plastic Arts of the same year, protesting against the official contest, due to the way it was organized.

In this outlook, “**art policies**”, could not be said to exist or to be practiced with defined objectives, such as the pretension of pointing out the direction to be taken by art expressions in general.

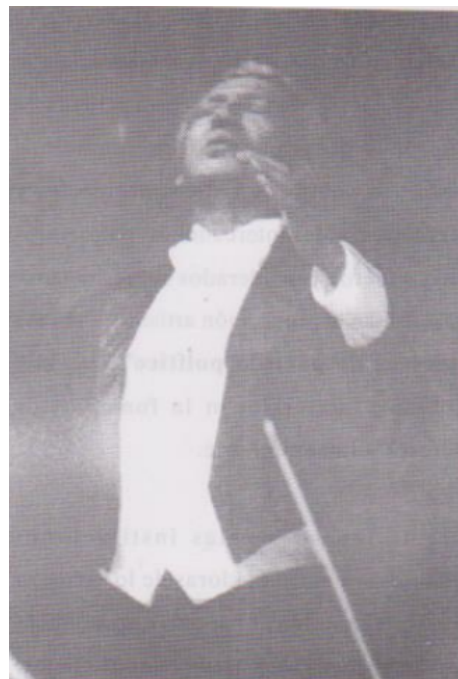
The purpose that they had was linked to stimulating the artist’s work, although each of them developed their work according to the diversity of criteria. Artists in search of an identity came together into small groups that were protagonists of different movements that not only modified the art’s criteria, but also contributed in the direction of some work lines that the authorities of culture took, projecting, in the best way, the country’s art on a local and international level.

The participation of Guatemala in international events was certainly through the Dirección de Bellas Artes (Fine Arts Management) in the effort of projecting Guatemalan art outside of our media, all this at the level of invitations to festivals, but without defining plans or cultural policies, since at that time Guatemalan art participated in events, but only occasionally.

We do not have to necessarily be sociologists or psychologists to understand that art, aside from being involved in many ways of daily life, has

had a more conscious insertion in the different social status. This has caused that from its purpose of expression and communication, it has become, in capitalist societies, a source that can be used as a commercial object, referring of course to the so-called erudite or cultured art. As such a usable resource, it is taken advantage of by governments for state policy, which differs from being “art policies” in the official spheres, an aspect that does not exist in the private spheres, where the only interest that is perceived is the economic and commercial factor.

All of this would probably only be of interest to a small group of people, if it were not for the fact that it involves, among other aspects, the artists themselves and the development of art in the field.



There is therefore a disagreement on the absurd “objectives” of official type, which are determined by “state politicians” and completely alien to the reality of the cultural and artistic field; this is because “state politician” do not belong to the world of culture and art and their interference in such a course only serves to try and justify their juicy salaries, even if they are completely absurd, because partisan or ethnic group interest prevail and not of the whole, taking advantage of the position to put dikes to the natural process of the “culture” of the nation, not or “cultures” of the nation.

Little are the exceptions, for the part of some governments that give the position of culture and art to emissaries interest in and knowledgeable about the art and culture of their country, the ministries of culture and its representatives are seen always as the least representative to the reality of the country’s culture, for they are servant to the interests of the state politics than of the real outlook of art.

Our country has been like this the majority of times, in which the discouraging and absurd village-like measures promoted by the institutions that should represent in our case the art and culture of the nation, are used as propaganda of political parties or ethnic groups, giving way to the

externalization of frustrations of all kinds, channeling them into measures that clearly have the least relation with the reality of the concrete world of art and culture of the nation. An, it is because when they involve **“alien interests of art”** with **“people who are indifferent to art”** and completely ignorant of such phenomenon, that they create dikes in order to complicate the historical natural process of the demonstrations that represent a historical phase and not in a state political ideology, which is totally wrong, and meaning for the artists who are aware of the aesthetic of reality, the distance and suspicion of the so-called “official art”, which unfortunately, is that it is made known inside and outside the country as the representative of the nation.



The so-called cultural policies and the interests that prevail when applied in our field, are affecting the field of cultural art,

due to the lack of interest and ignorance on the subject from the obliged authorities, leading in what refers to this stage, until the decade of the 80s, in the great crisis that manifest itself with the creation of the Ministry of Culture and Sports in 1988.

Art Policies since the 60s



The above is a clear indication that the work of the official artistic groups had not been considered as “art policies”, since the year of 1936 marks the beginning of a stage that means the formation of official art groups such as the National Symphonic Orchestra, which we will take as the main reference for this work. This is in the phase of organization and development as an institution, but there are no “policies”, because logically, the concerns revolved around training, artistic supervision and organization of activities in the field.

One of the objectives of the ensemble was “*to educate the musical taste of the people and to make known the values of the musical art of Guatemala*”.²

² Oscar Barrientos, *Historia de la Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de Guatemala*. E.d. José de Pineda Ibarra, 1986, pag. 121.

Little by little, from the contacts of the invited artists, a relationship of artistic compromises begins to form and intensifies over time.

Around the 1960s, almost 20 years after their establishment as an official ensemble, internal order problems arose in the orchestra because of different cases, among them the best conditions of work for musicians abroad, retirement due to illness or physical disappearance, etc., which made the substitution of these for new elements necessary.

During the year of 1952 the internal regulation is made for the *Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional* (National Symphonic Orchestra), but by the 1960s the country's political problems are resented in all art activities.



Huellas Urbanas, Walda Echeverría

Orchestra spaniard maestro José María Franco Gil takes upon the charge of Orchestra Director, starting with him and by government orders, the reorganization of the National Symphonic Orchestra. Eventually, around the 1980s, the Ogalev report appears, which pretends to use strategies to improve both the development of the Orchestra in its activities as well as to justify the wage increase, such report had a series of articles where there is definitely no appearance of any relationship of art policies and with the creation of the Culture and Sports Ministry in its programs of “cultural” reorganization “art policies” are never mentioned, which greatly affects the development and support that is pretended to obtain for the expert music culture.



During 1988 and after a series of setbacks according to the function that a ministerial entity could develop for the **art of Guatemala** is established, previous the creation of a vice minister of culture, the Ministry of Culture. Such an entity provoked amongst artists a series of displeasure and discomfort because it is made up of an exaggerated number of workers for the functioning of a minimum number of artists. In comments and articles of media outlets it is questioned the creation of such a ministry, for since its beginnings it was clearly seen that it was not directed towards art but towards other types of policies that specify cultural and sport activities, which only worked for more problems to the development of the cultured art of Guatemala.

Ministry of Sports and Culture

1988



In a document titled “*Democracia Cultural y Deporte para todos*” (Cultural Democracy and Sport for All), the then government publishes information on the “cultural policies” that were intended to be developed from the creation of the Ministry of Sports and Culture. In it, the compromise that it has as “the main

objective of this program is to guide the cultural, sports and recreational policy, with a focus on the good use of free time through recreation and sports”³ is quoted.

Throughout the 42 pages that comprise the booklet, **artistic activities** are not mentioned at all, referring to aspects such as cultural decentralization and regionalization, interinstitutional administrative coordination of culture and sport, which refers to issues such as: cultural development, national identity and defense, national reorganization program, social debt and cultural development⁴, which tries to justify the existence of objectives and purposes in fields of culture and sport, general policy guidelines with policies for the renewal of public administration in the cultural sector and other aspects that are detrimental to cultured art. The way in which this element works in that entity is amplified in such way that, the budget that could be used to improve scholar art, in this case, the official musical, is not only affected but it seems as if the intention is to make the art groups educated from the 1930s to the present day disappear.

³ Cultural Democracy and Sport for All. Ministry of Culture and Sports, 1988, Project PNUD, UNESCO-GUA-87, Introduction.

⁴ Idem.



The future of Art in Guatemala for the 21st Century



If it is art, it is not for all,

And if it is for all

-it is not art.

Arnold Schoenberg.

One of the issues that have worried the art cultivators, is the ratio of action, diffusion and support with what they can count in to raise the population's level of artistic appreciation, and in this way everyone can be placed in a level as other people who have been attracted by the seduction that music provokes have reached.

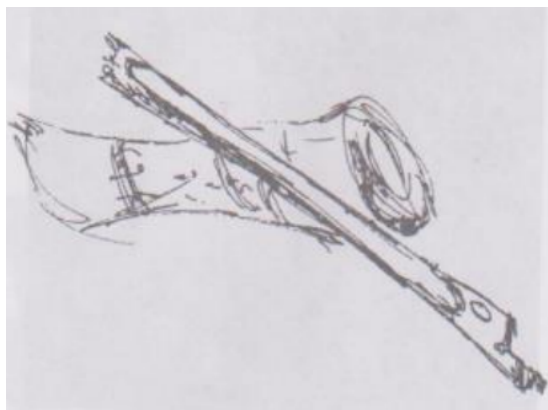
Parting from such point of view, and as it would be logical, after so many years of struggle trying to contribute to the

formation of good artistic taste in people, in whatever direction, but always within the parameters of the cultured art that is forming a diversity of refinements in the education of society, has an obligatory role to the state through artistic and cultural institutions. Unfortunately, we can feel the serious delay towards which the institutions in charge of protecting artistic groups are currently leading us. Among this institution, which appears negative in such aspect is the Ministry of Culture and Sports, which in its functioning and duty towards cultured art and groups that promotes it, has maintained as other governments have, an olympic lack of interest, in this case with a “policy” that is not precisely an “artistic policy”, and where partisan interests, and we could say, racist towards the “scholar art”, has greatly

damaged the objectives of the institutions and public related to the national artistic culture.

We can reflect that at such pace, the “FUTURE OF ART”, if no changes are made in the objectives of that ministry and by those obliged to do so who remain in key positions in such institutions, the struggle has been since the years of revolution, and have never reached results except the governments that were during the years 1944 to 1952 approximately, has been unsuccessful, persisting in the fragmentation of a line, towards improvements in both the artistic-professional, as in the social and economic achievements of such area of national culture.





The very future of art encounters opposition at the moment when the Ministry of Culture was created, where it logically should have been directed, since instead of promoting improvements to the official art groups that had suffered great pains to carry out their activities since years before, an amount of money was spent that only benefited those of the party in power. Suffice to say, that in order to manage the groups of artists whose members do not reach 400, including teachers of the National Conservatory, school of plastic arts, school of dance and theater group, as well as the Ballet of Guatemala, 7000 positions were created, if we do not fall short, which mutilated all the hopes for the country.

In the publication **Cultural Democracy and Sport for All** quoted in the preceding pages, and that contains the guiding principles of this ministry, there does not exist, according to an analysis made by the

same ministry, **A SINGLE REFERENCE FOR THE SCHOLAR MUSIC ART**, that of course relies mainly on the National Symphonic Orchestra, as the most important musical organization of the country.

Naturally, this deserves a strong critique, in the sense of showing an chauvinist attitude towards high quality music, and persisting in a racist character, because as such has been the direction in which the objectives of such thought have been outlined, confusing the sense of a historical “CONQUEST”, cemented on power, battles and the disasters that this entails, with a **CULTURAL FORMATION**, as a result of a diverse racial and cultural heritage, which forms the nation, and that twists depending on interests totally alien to the field of art and national culture.



Since considerable time, universal art has surpassed the character of outdated nationalism in all latitudes, the idea of “curious thing” that the “folcloric” type of expressions had and that pretended to be the only way to identify the population, has demonstrated not to be the right path. Such a way of conceptualising these aspects does not mean that it is the representación of a total national spirit, but only that of scattered elements of tiny pockets of cultural diversity of a nation, but were elements that survive a dominant environment that are agglutinated in a broader, more recent and unified culture, and not of a village racist sense.

In such a case, the ministry becomes the manager and supporter of a direction towards ethnic groups, which is fine, but which contradicts the sense of nationality. We only have as a nation, **one and only one national culture**, within it there are subcultures, which to recognize but if it

were the case, there would be a unique and determined support towards another substratum that makes up our nation as it is the Hispanic blood, and that this were put on top of every other cultural element that exist in our formation as Guatemalans, we for sure would be faking this concept of nation.

And so, in a non-pluralistic sense, but of exclusion in culture and where the Guatemalan people have the right to enjoy “universal art” of an educated type, it would appear that the elements that at this point, and although biology demonstrates a genetic universality in individuals, persists by part of certain people in wanting to promote a cultural difference in the national, reflexion that is appreciated in the beliefs of religious-sectarian type that have fragmented and divided within themselves the idea of a unique religious conception, same in art and cultural vastness.



Considering this spect, it is of knowledge of any scholar with broadness of criteria, if to identify today other nations, let's say at random, Italy, Greece, Spain, Germany, Egypt or United States, country which, like all the other countries of the continent, was populated in its pre-colonial period of a large number of indigenous groups, and had to resort to the Etruscans, Dorians, Ionians, Iberians, Vikings, mummies, or redskins, to cite them as elements of "nationality" would maintain "a racism" provoked by those who wield the idea that they are still today Vikings, Etruscans, etc., arguing outside the historical context in which such nations and the world have overcome today.

Cultural Racism and its Dangers



Using again as a referend the document of the Ministry of Culture and Sports⁵, it is possible to mostly find aspects of compromises, which are a result of the intern war of the country that have put pressure on Guatemalan culture, since it is on the latter that has a series of disadvantages in which there is an authorized abandonment towards areas of

⁵ Cultural Democracy and Sport for All. Ministry of Culture and Sports, 1988, Project PNUD, UNESCO-GUA-87, Introduction.

great importance within the culture, concretely "art".

The term "Cultural Racism" refers to the fact that among different ideologies, when one of them is in certain position of power and has certain mechanisms or instruments of imposition, it applies its ideological interests to any form of expression that exists, even to the majorities that make up a homogeneity that defines a national culture, in the sole direction of its own convenience.

And, if we have insisted in such term, it is because with events like the "500 years" since the discovery and conquest of America, the "Peace Treaties", the internal war that has lasted for many decades in the country and others, have been used as excuses, not to remember both here and in any place in the world, the presence of diversity of "ethnic groups" that make up



the term nation, but to awake hatred and resentment among that existent pluriculturalism, supported by foreign associations, that while pretending to overcome the phase of ideological and racist struggles that they fed a long time ago during the phases of their history, vent resentments in third world countries through conflict generation in the cultural and economic field.

Among this racism that has contributed to disunify the nation, there are facts that confirm it in many ways, we could refer to daily facts, such as expressions of “Guatemalans abroad” to which interested groups persist in convincing them not to use such term, but to “identify themselves” as indigenous, with a wrong notion of nationality, legally speaking, because this “Guatemalans” have gone through the process of integrating themselves to another nation by establishing and procreating children and grandchildren. In the last two generations that have grown in the American system, they have not “adapted” themselves but have grown and lived with the laws, language and customs of that country. An anecdote that deserves to be quoted, although unknown for many, let’s say it is known but not mentioned - some of these GUatemalans wanted to participate in “something about the culture of their ancestors, for what they pretended

to sing in english” the national hymn of Guatemala; and to also make known to them “some documents such as the Popol Vuh” but in english because they didn’t know or spoke well the Spanish language nor the dialect of their parents, but in this way they cultivated their *guatemaltequismo*.

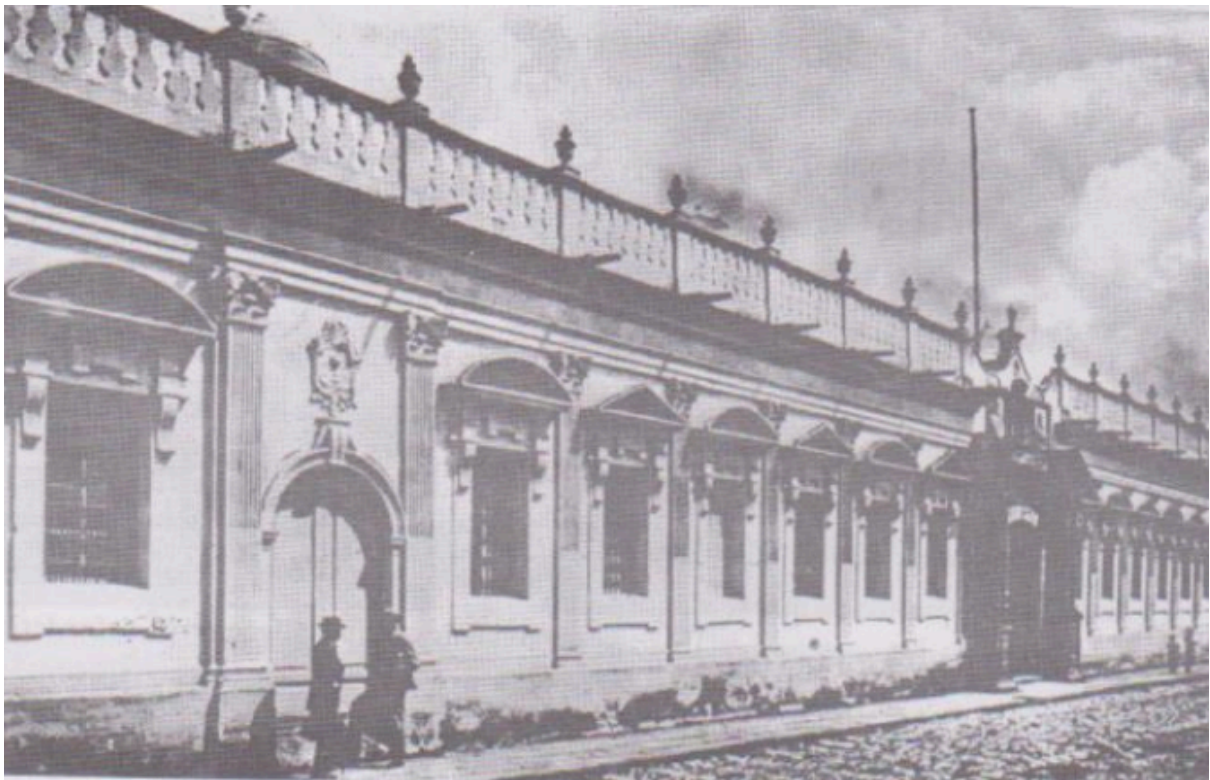
This reminds us of a brutality in our country, when it was pretended for the National Hymn to be sung at the rhythm of rock and roll? Or that it were to be translated in different dialects of the country, weakening the patriotic love that we feel as a nation. The result of such “dispositions” goes beyond, and it even uses the symbols... completely missing the idea of unification as national respect.

Talking in cultural terms, we would think **(and the nation to the north is once again our example)** what criteria would Americans have in the sense, that if it their national hymn were to be sung in the sioux or apache language, or of the Marsellesa was sung in english by all the french who migrated to United States, by arguing that in such way, nationalism would be justified by such actions.

It is safe to say that by suggesting such dispositions, we could appreciate more clearly the “cultural racism”.

There are a lot of examples “but our intention is only one, to appreciate that by external matters to the “artistic culture and, more than imposing this insistent cultural racism as an argument, the state entities have completely abandoned “cultured art”,

which in its generality wields no flag other than the cultivation of the same, and to which everyone has the right and option and an obligation to defend it, the official institutions obliged to defend it.



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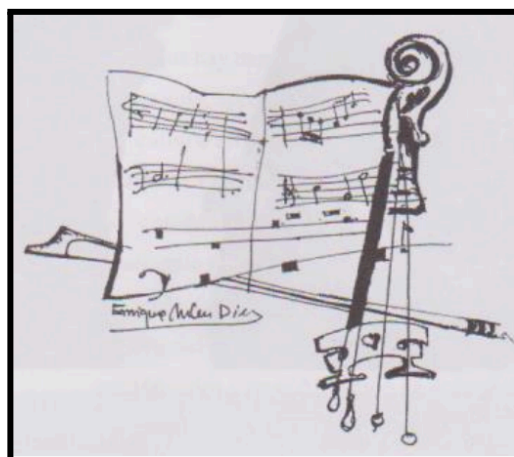
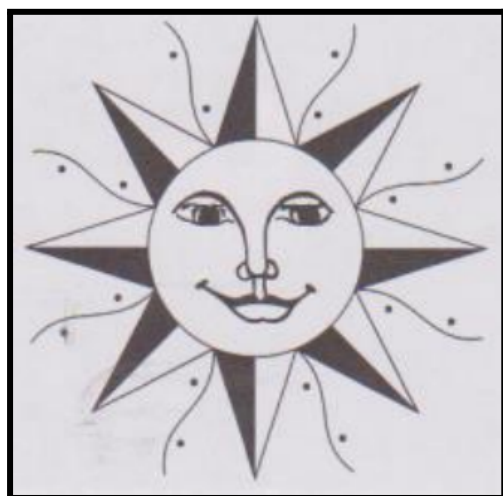
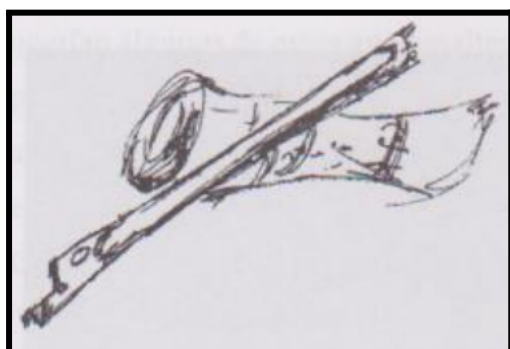
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