EMOTION IN POLITICS : HOPE AS A PRACTICE

EDITO

Anger and indignation are the nerves of revolt, powerful forces for action in the political struggle for freedom. Without them, the Tunisian people would not have risen up. The initial spark of the Arab Spring would not have been born, and no shockwave would have shaken the autocrats of the Middle East.

In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle defines anger as "*the painful desire to take public revenge for a contempt shown toward ourselves or those close to us, when that contempt is not justified.*"

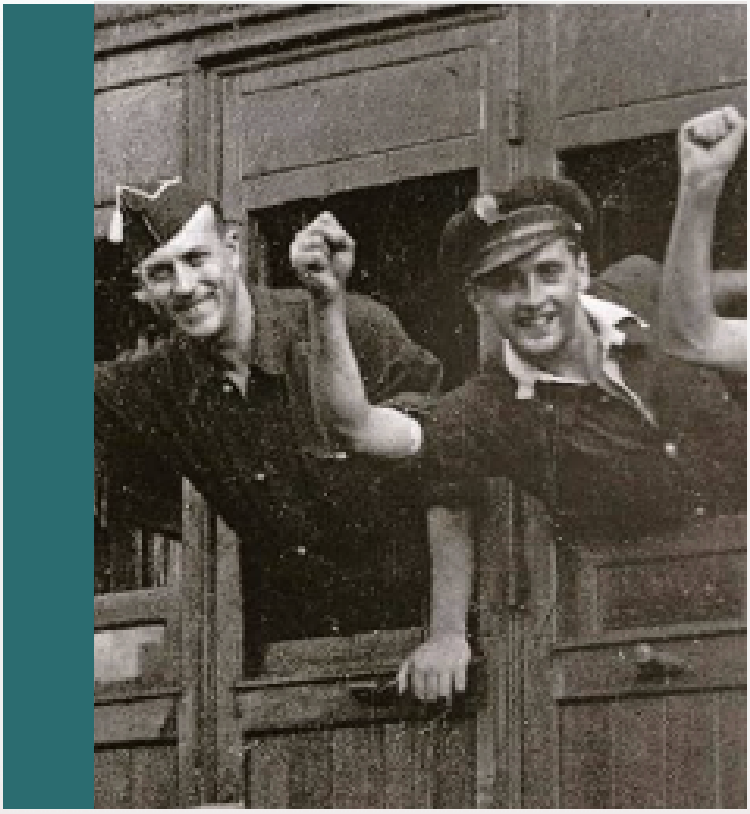
Anger is often legitimate; the actions that follow from it, and their consequences, are not necessarily so.

Freedom fighters and their leaders must know how to harness emotions, symbols, and those gut-level feelings that shake individuals to their core, elevating their courage and helping the greatest number cross the threshold into action. Indignation *against* also makes it possible to build broad coalitions: the Iranian Revolution of 1979, which overthrew the Shah's monarchical system, brought Marxists and religious groups side by side.

But one must also be wary of the raw energy born of indignation. It is necessary but insufficient, and it can be diverted to serve the interests of foreign powers or lost in the internal struggles of an elite, without ever challenging the system itself.

Anger and discipline, like rage and critical thinking, may seem incompatible. Yet the struggle for political rights must be fueled by legitimate anger, and guided by discipline and critical thinking. Otherwise, freedom fighters act at a loss: their energy and the risks they take end up serving others, without ever shaking the system of oppression.

Rage, and the sense of injustice are legitimate and



essential, but they must be combined with hope, strategy and planning.

Malraux's Hope is not the certainty of victory, but the inner strength that leads ordinary individuals to rise up against historical fatalism. It helps people sustain courage and the capacity to act in the long run, despite pressure and personal sacrifices.

A political opponent will be more willing to risk prison if he can glimpse the possibility of regime change that could rehabilitate them. A mother will be less hesitant to express her opinions publicly if she believes the risk is not in vain, but contributes to the fall of a wavering system.

Hope is fueled by highlighting the regime's weaknesses, one that pretends to be unshakeable but is often nothing more than a colossus with feet of clay. Along the way, intermediate wins must be achieved and shared, while waiting for the *"Grand Soir"* – the long-awaited moment of change.

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Indignation and hope: these two notions seemed essential to Salvador Allende in his vision of emancipation and the dignity of peoples. They lie at the heart of his last words, improvised only a few hours before his assassination by Pinochet's military during the 1973 coup:

"This is certainly the last opportunity I have to speak to you. The air force has bombed the radio transmitters. (...) History is ours; it is made by the people. (...) They will surely silence Radio Magallanes, and you will no longer hear the metallic sound of my calm voice. (...) The people must defend themselves, not sacrifice themselves; they must not allow themselves to be exterminated and humiliated. (...) Move forward knowing that soon great avenues will open, through which the free man will pass to build a better society." **– Salvador Allende**

Hope already considers what comes after: it does not focus only on today's struggle, but anticipates victory and reflects on tomorrow's system.

It anticipates, for example, the main pillars of a new constitution that better protects democratic foundations; it thinks about the figures of an inclusive transitional government; and it prepares the steps needed to enable a renewed living-together in a calmer society. Hope prepares the future. And so hope feeds hope.

