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AN APPEAL FOR SOLIDARITY

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AN APPEAL TO THE STATE

It is to the State that I appeal first. To the State whose first mission is to show a real determination to set in motion the political machinery to eradicate poverty. To the State, whom society, since the war, has made increasingly responsible for the care of the underprivileged. This kind of general political indifference leads the State in its turn to load its responsibility onto the one and only Minister of Social Affairs. And what else can he do but refer the matter to his Department for Social Action?

The result of such a refusal of responsibility on the part of society is that the underprivileged are isolated, without recourse, facing authorities which hold full power over the lives of people who are unprotected, because they can neither speak nor have any political representation. Apart from the Minister of the Environment, which members of the government have publicly declared themselves to be responsible for or in solidarity with these people? When has the Fourth World ever been the subject of debate by the Minister's Council or the whole government?

Nevertheless, the delegations we have heard this evening have told us repeatedly how unbearable and unjust it is to be so ignored, so kept on the fringe of society, and to see one's destitution dealt with only by administration, instead of it being wiped out with the will and cooperation of all.

With this in mind, what do we demand from the State?

First, we expect that its Head, the President of the Republic, recognise publicly that he represents and defends the interests of unrepresented minorities; we want him to see to it, as soon as possible, that the Fourth World gets the means for its socio-economic, cultural and political freedom ; he must above all ensure that the Fourth World is represented on all forums where other citizens can make themselves heard.

What else do we demand from the State ? .

We demand that, to ensure such a responsibility under the best conditions, the Head of State appoints a delegate to the Presidency of the Republic who would permanently monitor and evaluate the formulation and execution of a five years plan to wipe out poverty and all forms of exclusion in French democracy. We will not give a detailed account this evening of all our requests for legislation, the executive orders. for enactment, and special regulations. Since its creation twenty years ago, the ATD Fourth World Movement has worked to improve existing legislation, justifying the case for further reform. What we insist on tonight is a dialogue with the State, for which the ATD Fourth World Movement has always been ready to share its experience and knowledge. Such dialogue will break the vicious circle of poverty.

And finally, we demand that the State welcome and support the free efforts made by members of society in their fight against exclusion, and that if necessary it supplies the financial means for non-governmental action.

To support the freedom of members of society to introduce changes is to activate the system and to guarantee the capacity for the reform of public structures; it is to give the State the opportunity to work out a new form of democracy, which will no longer tolerate that unrepresented minorities be reduced to silence and destitution.

AN APPEAL TO THE ALLIES OF THE MOVEMENT

I appeal not only to the State but to all citizens, for it is they who finally determine the choices and main directions of any society. Confronted with exclusion the Fourth World reminds us recognised citizens that a new ALLIANCE must be made: an ALLIANCE between the EXCLUDED and the INCLUDED in society.

This alliance must transform the bases of political life, change the ideas of our time, give a new spirit to our institutions and laws and revive Church life.

We must therefore bring about a new alliance with the Fourth World, in order to defend the cause of rejected persons everywhere.

But to be true to such an alliance we will fight to the end in our campaign against any social planning which excludes the poor, and we will insist on the participation of the underprivileged in every situation. For to fight out the battle to the end is to denounce anything which makes a man inferior and rejected.

-We will lead such a campaign in our own family, and in our own environment, and this at the risk of giving up any comfortable ideas or privileges we may have.

-We will lead such a campaign in schools, in the colleges our children go to; we will refuse the neglect of the least gifted child, and of the child crushed by the weight of his family's poverty.

-We will campaign in the business firms and will demand admittance for those who have no professional training. In these critical times, we will see to it that they are not the first to be deprived of work and that workers' solidarity comes out fully in their favor.

-Such a campaign will lead us to fight in our organizations for the underprivileged, and in any family associations, groups or clubs that we belong to. In a word we will no longer accept that the underprivileged should be forgotten or neglected anywhere.

By joining the political party of our choice we will reorientate their policy towards a society without outcasts. We shall force on the State a social plan whose charter will be the defense of the underprivileged and the respect of their rights.

As for believers, let them act so that thanks to their dynamism and faith, our Churches will first welcome the underprivileged. Consider, haven't these Churches, for centuries been places of prayer and revolt against ignorance and against war, against poverty, against ignorance, against the domination of arrogant intellectuals. Let them become again, thanks to these believers, the Churches of the unprotected, of the ignorant and of those who suffer; places of hope for them, places of sharing, places to cast aside power, but also to witness God's refusal to accept oppression, injustice and hatred.

Our action in the campaign against war and starvation and the disregard of human rights will reinforce our refusal to accept any form of exclusion, for exclusion is actually the last stage of persecution against man's dignity and the respect owed to him.

Moreover, if we can, we shall give still more time to fight against ignorance at the very heart of the Fourth World, to waken the sub-proletarian population to reading, writing, learning, art, poetry and music.

That is why those of us who are educators and teachers will join those in the movement who are opening "street libraries" and running "cultural action centers". Those of us who are sociologists, economists or psychologists will participate in the research that the Movement's Institute has been carrying out for the last fifteen years, into the foundation of a body of scientific knowledge about the Fourth World. Those of us who are jurists will strengthen the committees of defense of the Fourth World's rights and interests. Those of us who represent the country, or those responsible in any way for the solidarity amongst citizens will do our utmost to give back to the agents representing the Fourth World their rightful place as social partners in all national institutions. Those of us who are nurses and doctors shall take up the defense of the sub-proletarian patients in hospitals, family planning clinics, etc...

Those of us who are writers, journalists will endeavour to create a language understandable by the least educated, and will denounce social exclusion.

All of us, without exception, can and must give our financial support. All of us will take the commitments of the movement into account, giving all we can in our campaigning, our justice and our love:

- in opting for a thankless struggle against poverty,
- in denouncing all situations that make people inferior.

Thus our campaign will become the determination on the part of the whole nation to eradicate the sub-proletarian condition.

AN APPEAL TO THE PERMANENT WORKERS

The struggle to liberate the Fourth World depends on you, ATD volunteers, you permanent members of the Movement, for it was you who started it first. Without your initiative, the subproletariat would never have taken part in contemporary history; the sub-proletarian families would have remained "problem families". It is you who have brought hope to a world where happiness itself was frightening. However, giving the Fourth World its place in history demands your steadfast commitment, and confirms that the Movement can never go back on its word.

In the face of the wind and the tide

In the face of the indifference of the State

In the face of the lack of understanding in institutions,

In the face of the apathy of public opinion,

In the face of the scorn of many,

And, for many long years, in the face of rejection by the Fourth World itself, you have created this Movement.

Today the sub-proletariat is beginning to rise-up ; militants are coming from its ranks. Henceforth the part you play will have to be more and more of a political one. But you must also penetrate still more deeply into the environment of those who have been recently outcast, and you must always be on the look-out for any others who are forgotten. The main purpose of the Movement will always be to eliminate the sub-proletarian condition, whatever form it may take. We will go on preparing the Fourth World to reunite with the other world. But how is it possible to join the unknown? How is it possible to join a society whose history has separated us from it ? It is up to you, the permanent workers in the Movement, to continue being the break in the wall of exclusion. You are fully recognised citizens and you have joined the outcasts of our society. You have made the journey the other way around from them, and you will keep on making it with any newly outcast people until no one is left out.

You have chosen to share your life with the sub-proletarian population. You are and you will be witnesses in the midst of the population that their hopes are not in vain, that they are not guilty, but on the contrary, that their experience is of value for all men. You are, and you will be at the very heart of the scandal. You will involve yourselves as before with its victims, and you will denounce all wretchedness, if necessary standing up against the State and public opinion. You have to find and gather allies around any subproletarian group of people. You have to get trained for the struggle and for solidarity. You have to transmit what the people of poverty have taught you about what injures them, and what makes them progress. You are reference points and you gather people around you. It is you who discover new fields where action should be undertaken, and the new forms of struggle necessary to carry it out. You guarantee that outcasts will be the first ones to profit by changes, and that the changes will be radical enough to leave none out. You must promise to fight to the bitter end and guarantee that the underprivileged will not be abandoned on the way. Because if you don't, who will guarantee that those who move ahead lead and encourage those who are too weakened by years of poverty.

By dedicating our lives to the radical suppression of poverty, we are and will be the witnesses of a society living in solidarity with the underprivileged.

It is a life contract that we have signed. We have accepted the burden and the risks of it, and all the deprivation as well, for the success of our cause depends on the rise of this people, and on our own disappearance to give way to its leaders.

AN APPEAL TO THE MILITANTS AND DELEGATES OF THE FOURTH WORLD

Militants and delegates of the Fourth World, I now appeal to you. You, more than anyone, are concerned with the decisions which will be made this evening about you and your children. It is your refusal to live without hope, your refusal to be considered responsible for your suffering, and your refusal to be treated as if you didn't exist or as if you were useless, that has inspired our Movement. Indeed, what is that Movement if not the expression of your revolt, and also of your cry for help. Nevertheless, you know that no body will set you free without your effort. You have been let down so many times. You know that the other society has neither the same interests, nor the same ideas, nor the same plans as you. That is why you are and will be the first to be responsible for your empowerment and for the changes in your lives.

And for you to be responsible will first mean continued training and learning, and the opportunity to meet to consider your situation. You must demand a school adapted to your children, and a job which gives you independence and guarantees your family a decent life.

It will also mean demanding vocational training suited to your background, together with the means for cultural and spiritual activity. So that your families may gain respect, that your children be blessed with your love and assured of being brought up by you, we will aim, for the next ten years, to wipe out illiteracy. You must aim not only to improve school attendance, but also to guarantee success for each child at school.

Undoubtedly we need the help of others to achieve these aims but we can also do our share. Let those who know how to read and write teach their neighbors. Let each of us be responsible for our vocational training and also for that of the whole group.

Let us enroll for in-service training courses, and let us encourage our grown-up children to attend adult vocational training. To be responsible is also to join family associations, parent-teacher associations, tenants associations, trade unions and political parties. You too are entitled to fight for justice, peace and human rights. To be responsible is to participate in the principal struggles of humanity. You will participate in these struggles on equal terms and you will instigate the fight against poverty. We cannot bring much knowledge, we cannot bring gold or silver, but we have something which no one else has and which they need to know about -our experience of being outcasts.

We know what freedom is better than anyone else, for we have always lived dependent on our guardians. As far as equality is concerned, we know how little we have of it, we who are treated as parasites and inferior human beings. We who live under the weight of scorn know the price of being a human being. We have experienced all that humiliates a person, a family, a neighborhood, and if we join in other struggles, it will be to make everybody aware of those who live in extreme suffering, defeat wretchedness and despair.

CONCLUSION

Therefore I invite you tonight to formulate an alliance between the sub-proletariat and society, an alliance between accepted and unaccepted citizens, an alliance which must change the relationships between people, political life and the thinking of our time. It is a real contract that I want you to conclude between yourselves tonight, an agreement between the sub-proletarian people, the State and members of society. What is at stake in this agreement is the creation of a democracy which learns from the lessons of its own injustice towards the underprivileged and restores to them their responsibilities as citizens.