

IV. — THE ARC-ET-SENANS DECLARATION

adopted by the Colloquium on the Future of Cultural Development (7-11 April 1972)

FINAL STATEMENT

An international group of specialists, representing various disciplines, have met to study the development prospects of advanced industrial societies. They have attempted to define the role that culture will be called upon to play in this development.

Their thinking has led them to warn governments, public opinion and those who guide it of the threats to which our societies will be subjected in the future. They concluded that policies for cultural action can, and indeed, must, henceforth play a determining role in shaping the future.

Thus motivated, they submit the following proposals :

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT : WHAT IS THE FUTURE ?

Left to itself industrial development exhausts the resources of nature and turns against man. The increasing awareness of the social costs of this development and its negative by-products are such that there are widespread doubts about its future.

The future has already begun, but in a society made up of heterogeneous and contradictory elements there is a refusal to recognize this.

These disparate elements, however, cannot be examined in isolation, since they are concomitant and interdependent. Their repercussions on the very conditions of human existence together constitute a major threat.

Hence we can no longer countenance the irresponsible game indulged in by governments in allowing the uncontrolled development of technological potential instead of recognizing the essential needs and giving them priority over artificial needs created by the profit motive.

The future of man cannot simply emerge from a computer with the inevitability of fate : the "heavy trends" of society including the population aspect, are not irreversible in responsible policy-making if backed up by all the weight of those diverse values, cultures and social forces which alone can keep a check on the socio-economic processes now threatening the biosphere.

While there can be no question of arresting economic growth — if only because of the situation in the Third World — culture must strongly assert itself in order to turn quantitative growth into an improvement of the quality of life.

The aim of cultural action, then, is to permit the re-thinking of society along different lines, and to promote in each individual a sense of responsibility for its possible development, enable him to face up the crisis and be the master, not the slave, of his fate.

Any cultural policy implies an ethical dimension.

CULTURE AT THE CROSSROADS ?

Culture, as experienced by the majority of the population today, means much more than traditional art and the humanities. Nowadays, culture embraces the education system, the mass media, the cultural industries (newspapers, books, records, video-cassettes, the cinema, advertising, housing design, fashion). It is not enough, therefore to be content with cultural democratisation aiming merely at generalised dissemination and consumption of the arts.

The school system is in a state of crisis, satisfying neither society's needs nor individual aspirations. Technological innovation and the way in which the confines of knowledge are constantly enlarged, urgently demand a transformation of the existing system into a pattern of permanent education, one of whose prerequisites is the "deschooling" of curricula and educational institutions.

People today are subjected to an indiscriminate barrage of information from the mass media. The result is supersaturation : the individual lacks the means to cope with it. Once he had a mind of his own, now he is becoming a mere target for information.

The cultural industries are activated by the profit motive and market forces : they are shaping an environment and begetting practices whose uncontrolled development cannot be condoned.

Art and its institutions, the dissemination of established culture are just as foreign to most sections of the population as they are to fringe groups and new social categories (young people, immigrants, etc.).

Immediate action is already required in order to :

- accelerate conversion of the school system into a permanent education system which satisfies interests and needs of the different groups of the population ;
- sever the mass communication agencies from the influence of political authority and economic power (monopolies, etc.) ;
- define and implement a policy aimed at the cultural industries ;
- create the conditions for a decentralised and pluralistic "cultural democracy" in which the individual can play an active part.

Hence the urgency of :

- devising a differentiated system of "cultural work-shops" and "social laboratories" and any other facilities by means of which the use of new technologies tending themselves to interpersonal exchange can be learned and practised ;
- instituting more direct links between cultural institutions and economic and social forces ;
- basing education on the principle of self-teaching and development of the critical faculty by transforming structures which tend to sterilise it (educational centralism, bureaucracy and explicit or latent totalitarianism of all kinds) ;
- defining national and international cultural technology policies and providing the necessary resources for their implementation.

Their cultural alienation and their being deprived of the opportunity to express themselves leave a void which present day ideologies are unable to fill : what is being said no longer corresponds to reality. And so there emerge a number of positive or negative phenomena : the use of new means of expression or escape, the growth of drop-out cultures, new forms of mysticism, resurgence of magic, drugs, etc.

Bookish, academic culture is degenerating. For want of authenticity, it is becoming marginal and even encouraging certain forms of nihilism.

The crisis in culture is symptomatic of the crisis in the established order : though cultural policy alone cannot aspire to solve the general crisis, it can and must help every individual to cope with it and help society to "manage" it.

A NEW APPROACH

The underlying purpose of any cultural policy is to bring all possible means to bear in order to develop ways and means of expression and to ensure complete freedom in their use. Man's right to follow a meaningful way of life and to embrace meaningful social practices must be recognised. It follows that conditions favourable to creativity must be fostered wherever they are seen to exist ; cultural diversity must be acknowledged, the sectors where it is weakest being guaranteed every chance of survival and development.

Effective, practical solutions cannot be found without fundamental research and experimentation. Contrary to the trend which may be currently observed and is reflected in most budgetary policies, encouragement must be given to efforts to secure long-term financing for fundamental research in the social sciences. Similar efforts must at the same time be devoted to perfecting methods.

CONCLUSIONS

The heavy responsibility which has fallen on to our shoulders and the technical possibilities now at society's disposal make it necessary and possible to bring about a reversal of policy, with the following aims in view :

- to replace passive consumption by individual creativity ;
- to break the constrictive hold of technology so as to allow room for human responsibility ;
- to replace democratisation of inherited or elitist culture by diversity of cultural expression founded in social pluralism ;
- to give priority to restoring harmony between man and his environment ;
- to substitute for a cultural system aimed at reproducing the present state of affairs a system directed towards protecting — including protection in political and technical terms — groups and individuals whose creative abilities offer the best means of coping with the situations created by the shock effect of the future.

Participation :

- Mr. Henri JANNE (Belgium)
- Mrs Kerstin ANER (Sweden)
- Mr. René BERGER (Switzerland)
- Mr. Hubert BROCHIER (France)
- Mr. Michel de CERTEAU (France)
- Mr. Augustin GIRARD (France)
- Mrs Jennie LEE (United Kingdom)
- Mr. Yrjö LITTUNEN (Finland)
- Mr. Abraham MOLES (France)
- Mr. Jesus MONEO (Spain)
- Mr. Edgard MORIN (France)
- Mr. C.A. Van PEURSEN (Netherlands)
- Mr. Georg PICT (Federal Republic of Germany)
- Mr. Emmanuel POUCHPA DASS (India)
- Mr. Pierre RICHES (Italy)
- Mr. Lionel de ROULET (France)
- Mr. Craig SINCLAIR (United Kingdom)
- Mr. Paolo TERNI (Italy)
- Mr. Umberto TERRACINI (Italy)
- Mr. Alvin TOFFLER (U.S.A.)