

Jean-Claude Bajeux,
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HAITI

Jean-Claude BAJEUX's speech at the Forum of Ministers of Culture in the Americas on the subject « Culture and Development ».

Honorable Ladies and Gentlemen, Ministers of Culture,

Ladies and Gentlemen, of Latin America and the Caribbean,

Ladies and Gentlemen, in charge of Cultural Policy,

Distinguished Friends,

It is meaningful that the theme « Culture and Developement » was chosen this year as the subject of our exchange and discussions. For, one realizes indeed, that at last, any development project is embodied within a well-knit structural context, at the same time static and dynamic. It is incorporated in a cultural milieu, a favorable factor, or on the opposite, an antagonistic one, in what relates to its taking roots.

This means that the two terms culture/development are necessarily For, how could we develop it, already, at least potentially, if this future gradual development was not inherent in the essence of the

subject itself? Articulated according to aristotelisian metaphysic principle. How could we design future development if first of all, we did not define the parameters of the human being, which is well expressed by the Creole say : « Joumou pa donnen kalbas » ? (The tree is known by its fruits).

How are we going to confront the realities of existence, the motivations of human beings if, we have not, before hand, unravelled, in the languages of culture, and the diversity of their expressions, the role of beliefs, aiming at an outer world, a transcending world beyond, but which is incarnated in concrete subject, aligned on daily routine work, in the emotional upwards, in the recipes for the raw and cooked food. They determine behaviors. They are embodied in what can perhaps be either a good motivation or a seed sown for future harvest, or well, to the contrary, an obstacle or an hurdle, within a society which, as you know it, is located at a given space, in a given time, within the inescapable historical or geographical constraints, but which always, because it is human, is a creation of men, and because of this fact, is already, itself, a cultural fact, marked by the unpredictable signature of freedom.

If thus one envisages to outline the goals and mechanisms of future development, it would be necessary to make an appeal to convene to those who know history, who have analyzed the myths and beliefs of this community, those who sing and dance according to

traditional rites, those who have traveled through the plains, the woods and mountains where people listening to the voice of their spiritual guides as well as the stories and tales that mothers tell to their babies, while watching the dances that warriors unleash in order to seduce their gods and their women, contemplating the marks that all artists multiply on all available support. To whom would the gospel of development will be announced if we had not first shared his meal and rites and deciphered what is written on his pyramids, his hieroglyphs and his ancient documents, the tales of his old people, the legend of Tristan and Yseult, the story of the creation of the world and the contradictory explanations about the Popocatepel's eruptions ? The extraordinary anthropological museum of Mexico, the gigantic statues on the Pâques Islands contain in their wonders, perhaps, recipes and keys for avoiding failures and the waste of resources when one strive to plan in view of development and when one wonders about what triggers people to march forward or what make them stand still and was make them indifferent.

For men is what he remembers. Without this memory, how to guess about the shapes of the new society? «My memory» said Aimé Césaire», is encircled by a belt of dead bodies». This archipelago which is ours, this volcanic half circle, these long stretches of reefs, of sand and mangroves, the tiny islands, this new Mediterranean was at the vaanguard when the conquerors started their trip around the world : Antillas, the Caribbean, the West

Indies, the Leeward Islands, is there a single spot in the world which suffered with so much violence and upheavals, during so long a time and in such depth the shock of conquest?

The history of the Antillean archipelago stopped to in 1492 before a new start with the entirely new population. Complete racial extermination which did not share even the beauty of of Anacaona and which left, on our sands and our grottes only marks and very small pieces from objects, as these wonderful stones, which, recently, were displayed in Paris, and allowed us to contemplate the strange face of Cemís, which turn to us to invite us from the nothingness of their extermination.

What is left from the Arrawacks ? Where are the Taínos and the Caribbean ? Who will speak on their behalf ? The long genealogical list of complaints stops here, as well as the games, the tools, the songs, the legends. Vac victis ! Woe to the vanquished, woe to those who had not been able to master the mystery of writing and who have struck the three knocks of destiny, the time of the « tabula rasa », the bare table, the time of the condohier, with their horses and their harquebuses. Cesar and his legions imposed their laws, from Scotland to Aegéft, lent the Wisegoths took hold of Rome, the genuine capital city of the « Oikou mene », The habite world, while the lieutenants of Mohamed were stopped at Poitiers

and at Vienna, but established footholds from Constantinople to Indonesia. « We, civilizations », wrote Paul Valéry, « we know that we are mortal ». What letter epitaph for Moctezuma, for Anacaona and her husband Caonabo ?

This history becomes ours, as it is that of the sons of the empire. Perhaps, they may say, that we can accept or refuse this heritage, make our choice and say goodbye to the rest. The Antillean rainbow, most typical of the instability, fuels these hesitations, these denials, these turn about faces, these contradictions and these excruciating amnesias. On these very small areas, all Europe wished to create an empire : Danish, Holland, Swedish, Spanish, English, French, American people have succeeded them through centuries, as cyclons, earth shakes, tidal waves and floods...

We know that the void left by indigenous people forced the arrival of men from all the horizons, from all races, in a slave trade which extend throughout Africa up to Mozambique, and later will look for unqualified low-class workers all the way to India and even in China. After the racial extermination, this is an holocaust of four centuries that will last during four centuries, dominated by this extraordinary document entitled « The code noir » all the trigular trade. All the Haitian writers, without exception, have discribed this long suffering, from Jean Brière to René Dépestre, from Herard Dumesle to Roussan Camille.

This is this past that tells who we are, and tells us who we are. This inventory that has no end, goes back to the genesis of our history, to this road that start in the Island of Goree to the Croix des Bossales, like to the cotton markets of the deep south in the United States, determines the profiles of our personalities. This call for a sentence. This calls for vital decisions on what we accept to be, on what type of person we want to develop and be. Are we on the beach or on the castle of the caravels? Such is the axis and such are the questions asked by basic texts of the antillean culture such as the Cahier d'un retour au pays natal of Aimé Césaire, Le Discours Antillais of Edouard Glissant, texts as decisive, for our young people, the Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité of Jean-Jacques Dessalines.

The double, triple, quadruple migration which constitute the present populations of our antillean islands brought like jes..... or float.... to our coasts traditions, concepts, models from every where, creating everywhere disarticulated, societies multicolored communities. Cross-breeding is the accepted custom, even if many people refuse to be faced directly with this fact or try to avoid it in an oblique fashion. Thi is a mix of old things and concepts originating from all over the world where each person, for the better or for the worst, make his choice whether it is about the smile of the angel of Chartes or the sinister message of Baron-Samedi.

All the political systems have existed or exist in the midst of the Antillean caravanseraï, a free market of concepts, images of gaudy colors and of cooking recipes. This capacity of utilization is stunning, as are also the capacities of being blinded, of partiality, of assimilation in the context of cross-breeding which leads us not to bear anymore the mirrors and so hide a part of the family photo album.

But all the people have known this heteroclit date , all the people and all the cultures have been formed in the lottery of cross -breeding. The nations forming what we called the West linguistic term borrowed from geography, from the localization of the European peninsula spread towards the end of the world, the Finistère, face to the sun which sits down on a mysterious and unlimited sea, have not yet finished, up to now, to settle their accounts with the co-existence that history has created.

This western world had to successive to digest the contributions originating from the deep parts of Asia, as also the inheritance from Jerusalem, Athens and Rome. He made the cardinal points of its culture, without mentioning the late contribution of Islam but

A precious one since it was countless translations in Arabie of green plutosophers. This Western world took advantage of every cultural contributions, assimilating all the civilizations of the Book,

formulating a stunning synthesis of biblical and christian faith, of greet reason, of Roman law, of theand Chinese discoveries in mathematics as well as the art of the eloquence of powder and the mastery of horses. The greet myths have not eased to fuel the imagination. Heleraic, Greet, Roman, German, Mercantile, industrial and trading Europe, with its convents, its wines, its cheeses and: Brand new grammars, its....., its compasses and the helms of its boats, this very small during the course of four centuries, made a four around the world dominant it, measuring it, leading it, equipping it, vial source of row materials and low-paid cheap workers.

The caravan came from the East, that is the African continent, alighted terrorized and dumb. The societies which are going to emerge from this coexistence of the master and the slave, to find again a language, and it need be, to create one, as is she case for the Creole because the alphabet has become the passport for a new humanity and the rule of three, the magic formula for modernity.

Whether they are called Anthenor Firmin,....., Aime Cesaire, Luis Pales Matos, M.... del Cabral, Claude ..., Jacques Roumain, Lezama Lima, V.S. Naipaul, Juan Bosch, Jacques Stephen Alexis, Luis Or Luis Rafael Sanches, the ambitions goal of perfection in the handling of writing does not dnow any limits, one should, at did in the past the Enlightenment humanists, master the languages in making them rime

on the fashion of the masters of the art. For outside of the book, above all when one must recuperate the part and types of behaviors disappearing in the vernacular. Outside of writing, there is nothing more than endless repetition, circular thought, stagnation and recession, outside of the number system and outside of the weight and measure system, one floats in the approximation of subjectivity, in the surprise of.... And fancy evaluations.

But also, at the same time, through this writing, as through arts, painting, music and dances, myths emerge, imaginary Calypso rhythms, merengue or reggae, rumba that flourish.... Deep in the origins of these vernacular cultures. Hot of culture, like everywhere else, but here, with the intensity created by the financial pressure of the islands and the tragic nature of their history, of banishment and exclusions, of diversity of origins.

This is peculiar to any culture to absorb the inheritances and the B features, to digest and transform the elements provided by the contacts with outsiders" to make new what is known from all in a dialectic where no synthesis is permanent. It is possible, at some moments that the thinkers preach rejection, amputation, amnesia. But, we know that all exclusion bears a cost which is paid in terms of impoverishment, or pathological behaviors.

In these societies born from successive disasters, where was imposed during four centuries a system based on the negation of the human, there was obviously the repercussions which will be slow in

disappearing. The Europe of the Book, the Europe of Jesus-Christ, left their imprints on Pi...., on Cortes, on Bertrand Dógeron and on Nicolas Ovando, models of unheard of violence but above all, the poison of racism. Caliban becoming free tortures himself to no end repeating endlessly racist theories forged by Gobineau and his disciples. The sons of Caliban utter to the face of each other the mo.... Slogans about racism even to the point of prohibiting the use of the language and the music of others", even while everyone is using them.

The negation of cross breeding leads to self-depreciation. The identity crisis, as well as the incapacity of million of children to accede to writing and to quantitative procedures, block the ... to development and incite entire Of society to suffer from cultural, social, economic and physical exclusion, so as not to speak openly about total apartheid. Thus, know, after so much painful experiences which have left their marks on the history of the twentieth century, that our perception of foreigners, based on criteria of race, leads to fatally wishing their extermination, to lies about their origins and to the twisting and Facts of our history.

The finality of the racist approach, is the Of facts, the aut mass deportations, the exile of Albert E.... and Thomas C..., this finally Said final solution,

The smoke above the concentration camps. It is finally the time variable which threatens both culture and present development of our mini-nations, of our mini-states.

The entire manhood at the dawn of this third millenium is su.... To set the clock at the same time and at the same pace , even if is has to go through in a few years along the path that others took centuries to go through. All nations are summoned to set their face at the rhythm of the world progress to break the archaic locks and obstacles.

The fever of development entire all over the earth planet but at the same time, amnesia, exclusion of outsiders, forward flights, self-hatred, fear of coexistences, self-centered egotism, the rejection Our own identity and historical filiations This is why, like any time before these days, do we need the people of the Book, the literary people, the writers, never had we needed so much cultured men and women.

Jean-Claude BAJEUX Petion-Ville,

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