

OVERCOMING DEPENDENCY: A PLEA FOR TWO NATIONS*

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Having followed us up to this point, the reader will have noticed our critical standpoint not only towards the United States' economic and cultural domination of Canada and Québec, but furthermore towards the kind of society which has been practiced in the West. Moreover, we have particularly stressed the cultural aspect of this imperialism, as well as the cultural contradictions of such so-called industrially advanced societies, contradictions which decide economic crises. But before we proceed to outline the possible developments which are still at an embryonic stage and which must be elucidated and brought to light, we would like to deal with a number of ambiguous points which are inherent to our criticism. We are referring, naturally, to our particular usage of the notion of culture.

In actual fact, many have already discovered the notion of quality of life along with new values which would restore meaning to people's lives at the tail end of the twentieth century. Cultural affairs, cultural policies and cultural development are widely spoken of today. In Québec, the Parti Québécois government has established a Ministry of Cultural Development because of an awareness on the part of certain segments of the population regarding the threat posed to culture by political and economic domination, an awareness which has existed for more than two centuries. For the last two decades, every political party which has come to power has created legislation affecting language and, more generally, culture. Fearing a case of genocide, the State deemed it necessary to take action. One might believe that in order to escape this situation, the State must legislate, establish new administrative structures, and exercise a strict watch over the "francicizing" of business and other sectors of public life. However, one might not perceive that such measures for the public good reinforce the power of the State and tighten the grip of technocrats and bureaucrats on vital sectors of social life. Therein lies the hazard which confronts any who demand the intervention of the State to defend itself against the dangers presented by a condition of dependence and domination — political and economic. Thus, in

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Québec, those who favour the progressive creation of a self-managing society where the powers appropriated by the State would be by definition redistributed among the regions and working and living collectives, are generally in favour of a government stronger than that of Canada. But there lies a contradiction which can only be overcome if people maintain a close surveillance of the State and constantly demand the decentralization of its powers, both old and new.

In cultural matters, it is to be feared that the State, intervening with just cause to ward off the danger of national genocide, might come to consider cultural development as a kind of extension of economic development. At the core of the matter is the application of the consumer society model, predominant in the realm of material goods (i.e. a few producers with a majority of consumers), to the realm of symbolic goods. Whether the producers are in the service of the State or private enterprise, the outcome is virtually unchanged: citizens remain passive, satisfied to consume. If culture is that which gives meaning to life, to society and to nature, why, then, is this meaning produced by specialized agencies: on the one hand, the schools, and on the other, the means of mass communication. From the beginnings of industrial society, its citizens, starting with the working class, have been stripped of their traditions, knowledge and skills to the profit of a growing number of specialists who fragment life and cultures. Thus reassuming control of one's own destiny begins with culture. It is, then, for lack of a better term, a matter of "popular culture". Francis Hearn¹ shows how, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the English working class was stripped of its age-old culture and incorporated into the dominant society by the bourgeoisie. In our case, it is not a question of proselytizing some kind of return to days gone by but rather one of enabling citizens themselves to create the representations and values which, in the end, give meaning to their lives.

The sociologist Fernand Dumont has made the following comment on the subject:

It is perhaps possible to hope for the removal of this censure which hangs over 'popular culture' through the combined efforts of sociologies of production and bourgeois representations of high culture. But it cannot be reduced to its opposite, identifying 'people' with an abstract 'proletariat' fulfilling its historical destiny with the guidance of professors or dictators likely to understand and manipulate history. Popular cultures have retained a singular sense of the kind of life, the solidarity of neighbourhood and kinship, the bonds of practice and culture which are spoken of so abstractly in epistemologies. Therein lies the promise, not of the past or its resurrection, nor of a folkloric repetition, but rather of social change in which culture takes up the gauntlet.²

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We are far from what has been called the "culturalist frenzy", which in France, for example, at a given time resulted in the establishment of "cultural centres": people of all regions had to be introduced to the treasures of French culture. "Never," Antonin Artaud, "have we spoken so much of civilization when life itself is fading away." Thus, if the American empire extends its cultural domination in order to better assure its economic and technological domination, each country existing in its orbit begins to wave the cultural banner to conceal exploitation and alienation. We readily speak of quality of life, of cultural democracy, implying that all citizens should have the benefit of a certain "culture" which, until only recently, was restricted to elites. In this context, the ideal of cultural democracy follows on the heels of economic democracy, just as that of cultural development traces the idea of economic development. Indeed, it is a matter of retaining the political and economic system as such, while adding to it a few more material and symbolic goods for the purpose of consumption. In our view, it is clear that the citizens' reassuming control of their destiny does not stop at culture. Far from it — rather it is aimed at the political and the economic; the self-managing society must proceed toward the control of these three social instances.

A final comment on the subject will suffice. Curiously enough, even those who side with the "people" ideologically, and who demonstrate great concern for them, nonetheless remain elitist. Bertolt Brecht, in his writings on theatre wrote:

The history of all falsifications that have been operated with this conception of *Volkstum* (popular elements) is a long and complex story which is part of the history of the class war. We shall not embark on it but shall simply keep in mind the fact of such forgery whenever we speak of our need for popular art, meaning art *for* the broad masses of the people, for the many oppressed by the few, 'the people proper', the mass of *producers* that has so long been the object of politics and now has to become its subject.³

The great revolution of recent years has been the citizens' increasing dissatisfaction with simply delegating power (be it even to create a "popular" art destined for the people); they are choosing rather to assume such power themselves. All this merely demonstrates that the measures taken by the Québec government to protect and develop a national culture, while admirable, consequently reinforce the power of the State, and cannot suffice to halt American imperialism nor to produce the conditions for a re-distribution of power between Canada and Québec.

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It seems, in our view, that for the reasons previously mentioned, the problems of our epoch must be considered in their entirety. We allow ourselves to adopt such a perspective, certainly not because we believe that we possess a ready-made solution, but because we hold that isolating these contradictions can only aggravate them. At this point let us return to our earlier remarks concerning John Hutchison's important work, *Dominance and Dependency*.⁴ Hutchison has discussed three major contradictions in Canada, and we paraphrase: firstly, the binational and bilingual nature of Canada; secondly the regions with their provincial governments; and thirdly, the contradiction of the relations between Canada and the United States. The author examines the latter without, however, denying the equal importance of the first two. To simplify matters, one may say that the three have been dealt with from three angles: Québec-Canada — two nations, two languages — would present a cultural contradiction; the regions and the central government would pose a political problem; the contradiction created by historical relations between Canada and the United States would be of an economic nature. Without envisaging these contradictions as overlapping or, even better, as reacting upon each other, one cannot hope to overcome them, much less describe them. It is clear that if these contradictions are merely identified as if they only existed locally in a world which had simply to be patched here and there, then a fourth dimension is not taken into account, one which relates to the fundamental nature of the type of society to which Canada and Québec, among others, belong. We must underscore the fact that this fourth dimension — in short, the crisis of civilization through which the West is passing — can help us in the development of hypotheses which would suggest solutions to the problems posed by Hutchison's three contradictions. And it is perhaps because of the principal contradiction of our industrially developed societies — the separation and fragmentation of society and knowledge — that we approach our problems with the attitude of an amateur mechanic who tinkers with each part of a motor without wondering if the whole is equal to what is asked of it. In other words, treating separately the political, economic and cultural contradictions identified in Canada seems, in our view, destined to lead to unrealistic solutions. Even if one were to consider Hutchison's contradictions in a global manner, and as limited to each other, without taking into account those which are specific to industrialized societies, it would seem that here again, an important dimension, indeed perhaps the most important, would pass unnoticed. If the word "radical" were not such a hackneyed term, we would describe our approach as such. Indeed, to be radical is to go to the root of a problem to examine it. In our case, the root seems to be precisely our type of society, or, in other words, our mode of production. It remains to ask ourselves which, in the final analysis, is the principal instance: culture or economy?

If we examine the economic analyses in Québec and Canada which detail the United States' domination over these regions, we cannot help but be inclined to think that the authors of these analyses deplore the fact that here in Canada the accomplishment of the same kind of "development" is hindered. We have no

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wish to generalize Walter Gordon's position regarding the ensemble of economic critics who denounce American dependence and domination, but for lack of any other project of society which they would oppose to that of this country, it seems to us that their criticisms reach a dead end. What can be said of writings which, like those of the Pépin-Robarts Commission, let the economic and cultural domination of the United States pass unmentioned, and, by dint of contortions dictated by good intentions, end up balkanizing Canada in order to assure the perpetuation of Ottawa's technocrats and bureaucrats? The Pépin-Robarts report remains the best example of insipidness of all the reports coming out of the Canadian State. It claimed to present a political approach, but at best one could say that it epitomized state control was bureaucratic and abstract. Had it not been for Mme Chaput-Rolland's tears and wringing of hands this document would have passed unnoticed in Québec as well as in Canada.

If our inclinations bear us towards the cultural dimension, it is also very clear that this approach carries with it serious risks in addition to that of reinforcing the power of the State. To deal with culture without taking into consideration politics and the economy, as if it existed as a separate element and as if cultural dependence were not the extension of economic domination, would also be highly unrealistic. If our conception of society is correct, that is to say that its parts are interrelated, we can produce hypotheses regarding any one of them with the assurance that we will encounter the others along the way. We will begin our approach, however, with a demand that seems to be present in several sections of the population and at a variety of levels: precisely the demands of autonomy which is opposed to heteronomy. For a society, to be heteronomous is to receive the laws which govern from another, or to be led by forces beyond its control. It seems to us that many protest movements have been marked by the aim and conquest of autonomy, from the anti-imperialist battles of the Third World, through the many groups and individuals who are reasserting control over their lives, up to the feminist movements. A number of years ago, one of us (Rioux) wrote the following: To the extent that the ever greater development of technical society has eroded the traditions which incorporated different aims to be achieved in a global society, such aims are now largely determined by the finality of society's cumulative processes: economic growth and technological development. The goals of advanced industrial society, its ideology, are incorporated within its own system of production. Up to the present day in such a type of society, the different agents of education have aimed at producing a *normal* man, that is to say one adapted to this kind of society, one who consumes and produces as society dictates. Not only does theoretical sociology favour adaptation, statistical normality, in taking equilibrium as its key concept, but furthermore, different applications of the social sciences base their therapeutic prescriptions on the idea that individuals must adapt to society at all costs and must not disturb the status quo. The great leap which the society of tomorrow has to accomplish is the passage from the *normal* man to the *normative* one. According to the biologist Kurt Goldstein, a simply adapted existence can be one of an unhealthy

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organism, adjusted, however, to a restricted environment.

A healthy man, he notes, is not *normal* man, but normative man, one who is able to create and accept norms. The externally-oriented man of our industrial societies must be succeeded by the autonomous man, capable of establishing his personality and behaviour on values which he will be able to create and accept.⁵

This point of view would seem to be sound, perhaps even more so today than ever.

Before we proceed any further, two remarks are necessary. First of all, it is clearly not our position to embrace a point of view akin to some modified expression of "moral revivalism", that is to say the belief that if individuals change their ways one by one, society will be changed in the end. As we do not abstractly and arbitrarily separate individual and society, and as we believe them to be dialectically linked, we do take both into consideration. In clearer terms, this means that if institutions must be altered as much as individuals, nonetheless, a given type of society will correspond, to use Reisman's expression, to a particular "social character". But which comes first — the mode of production or the social character? We think the two are inextricably linked, that they construct themselves simultaneously, albeit with one or the other lagging behind creating tensions which could result in a revolution of the right or left.

Our second remark concerns the ambiguities stemming from the usage of two notions: autonomy and autonomization. In standard dictionaries, "autonomy" bears the idea of non-dependence, non-domination and the power to decide for oneself. It is in this sense that we employ it. In contrast, the notion of autonomization carries the idea of a separation which distorts reality and which denotes an ideological position, which in this context is erroneous. This meaning may be found in a number of works belonging to the Marxist tradition, and earlier, when we warned of the danger of separating the contradictions discerned in Canada and Québec, it was autonomization that we had in mind. The context will indicate whether it is a matter of autonomy or autonomization.

Protosocialism and advanced capitalism

These remarks concluded, it would seem that in fact if we adopt the critical point of view, it can be perceived that the proceedings which we have drawn up from several scenarios not only apply in opposition to advanced capitalism and its imperialist extensions, but also against proto-socialism, "actually existing

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socialism" to employ Rudolf Bahro's expression.⁶ Moreover, from a normative perspective, which is the one preferred, we arrive at the notions of self-liberation, self-creation and self-management. Commenting on Bahro, Marcuse wrote:

The inertia and weakness of the masses, their dependence, which is expressed, in capitalist countries, by the people-dominant class dichotomy, and in socialist ones by the civil servants-people dichotomy, tends almost by necessity towards an autonomization of the "top". He is of the opinion that this evolution may be thwarted by the progressive establishment of a sort of Organization of Councils (self-managed, cooperative).⁷

Clearly, if we examine the two dominant types of society — protosocialist and capitalist — from this critical perspective, then the explicit and implicit assumptions on which these two types are based must be rejected. In the first case, the idea of a concordance between theory and practice, between logic and history, becomes invalid; no longer only the proletariat but each individual, each group, becomes a historical subject. Moreover, primacy is restored to subjectivity and the conscience, a primacy which they had previously lost in favour of a mechanistic logomachy. The same results hold in capitalist countries. The idea that the right society is at the end of wild economic growth and unlimited technological development finds itself repudiated in favour of another. The latter proposes that everyone — individuals, groups and collectives — become increasingly more aware of the dead ends towards which their societies are heading, and decide to progressively free themselves, create themselves and manage themselves. Collectives in both types of society have abandoned their autonomy to the profit of segments of dominant classes which take upon themselves the concern of leading society to their greater class benefit. How, then, can we explain this voluntary or forced abdication by the largest part of their societies, and how is it to be emancipated? The notion of emancipation is central to the intellectual tradition to which Marcuse belongs. It is derived from the judicial notion which designates the end of guardianship, or the son's autonomy with regard to his father, thus the acquisition of one autonomy in relation to another. How can the fact be explained that individuals and groups throughout history have been forced into dependency, and often have accepted it? Bahro and Marcuse mention compensation. Emancipation is abandoned for security which the dominator — be it class, society or empire — promises to its subordinates. The sovereign defends the serf against other sovereigns; the bourgeoisie develops forces of production and everyone profits; through the empire, order is maintained in opposition to external barbarians. In just such a way the non-denunciation of the United State's economic domination over Canada is considered as the price to be paid for a higher standard of living.

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Traditionally, women have submitted to men in return for so-called protection and economic security.

Today it seems that in a growing number and variety of cases, groups and individuals of several countries are placing emancipation and autonomy at the forefront of their political demands. As these lines are being written during the Iranian and Afghan crises, we can clearly see how compensation operates at an international level. Each of the two empires feeds on the other, using the promise of their protection and "pax americana" or "sovietica". This enables them to rule over the citizens of each and over the countries defined by each of them as falling within their sphere of influence; that is to say the countries which they can use as buffers and as reserves of raw materials and/or as commercial outlets. In the name of a principle of terror, those groups of bad citizens who dare "divide" their country are exposed to public condemnation. According to the United States, Russia threatens American citizens by monitoring them with increased closeness in Iran, while the USSR claims to be threatened within close range of its borders. This becomes a marvellous opportunity for each dominant class to restore its image and to justify all kinds of "gulags". And while internal protest increases in scale within these two empires, nothing better reinforces the hegemony of the dominant classes than sending citizens off to die for the hegemony of their country in Afghanistan or Vietnam. Let the Moslems of the USSR and American dissidents hold it to be true: their Empire is keeping watch. What better reason to reaffirm internal power and to eliminate the enemies of the people than an external threat? In this way empires and dominant classes perpetuate their hold over their satellites and their people as a whole.

In our view, two things must be distinguished: on the one hand, the defense of national territory, and on the other, the maintaining and expansion of the empire. The new type of society, which we believe to be emerging, is in no way at variance with the defence of territory, in fact, quite the opposite. When each citizen has the opportunity to participate in the nation, when each group feels responsible for its actions and no longer considers itself manipulated by the power elites, then the efforts made toward territorial defence can be maximized. Moreover, the new type of society no longer justifies the domination of one class over another, nor that of one country over others; thus, armed confrontations to assure the control of citizens and countries can be avoided. In any case, over the last few years, we have observed an increase in the number of non-aligned countries, those who refuse to be taken under the wing of the superpowers, being aware of the exorbitant price of dependency; others are only waiting for the opportune moment to inform the empire that they are taking back their freedom. Within the empires themselves, individuals and groups through different means which vary in the USA and the USSR, also wish to stop being manipulated by their own dominant classes and are rebelling against exploitation, domination and alienation. Otherwise, given that the natural resources which sustain both internal and external domination are gradually becoming scarcer, humanity will become engaged in struggles which bring only death and

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destruction. Thus our reflections on societies, far from ignoring the war of empires, fully take it into consideration since whatever would become intolerable within one country would become the same in the others as well. Indeed, we hold that both types of domination, internal and external, go hand in hand and are subject to the same logic. In simple terms, one could say that this logic is based on the domination and exploitation of nature. Nature is given to man for him to make use of after having discovered its laws. In accordance with this logic, a mode of production based on such an assumption regarding nature — the ever-increasing development of productive forces — would come to dominate, exploit and manipulate people. What Habermas has called instrumental activity applies not only to nature but to man as well; that which Lenin called the highest stage of capitalism, i.e. imperialism, closely follows the lines of this logic of domination and exploitation. To put it plainly, to battle imperialism is to attack values, representations and conduct which are the logical extensions of those at the heart of societies resulting from the industrial revolution, whether they are in protosocialism or in advanced capitalism. To deny the relation between the type of society and its imperialist embodiments is to conceal part of the truth. In our case, this assertion does not move us first of all to economic or political reforms, but rather to cultural ones. The state of subordination of one country to another not only passes through the "opting out of the empire" to accomplish the same thing as this empire, but, as Bahro states:

A general abolition of the state of subordination is the only alternative which can confront the unlimited expansion of material needs (. . .) the cultural revolution, overcoming the state of subordination, represents the *necessary conditions* (author's emphasis) for breaking with the extensive economic dynamics and for reinserting man in the balance of nature.⁸

The East German authorities must take these ideas seriously since the editor, on the cover of the French translation of this work, wrote: "Bahro was arrested on the twenty-third of August, 1977 and sentenced during closed proceedings to eight years in prison." Since then, he has been freed and expelled from East Germany.

Those of our readers who could be reassured by the thought that this cultural revolution advocated by Bahro aims at the transformation of protosocialism, actually existing socialism, to institute advanced capitalism, our system, are deceiving themselves. As Marcuse so clearly observed (*Les temps modernes*, n° 394), Bahro declaims against both types of society, even though like many other dissidents, he would probably have preferred the opportunity to go to advanced capitalist countries to spread his ideas rather than go to prison. Criticizing both types of society does not mean that one cannot hold a preference for one or the other. It is the case, however, that the imperialism which threatens us is on our doorstep, and is therefore the one we must criticize.

Returning to those ideas of autonomy, non-subordination and non-dependency which seem to have marked recent protest movements, we must also

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stress another extremely important break which has occurred during the same time in the idea of nature. It would not be far from the truth to state that the emergence of another conception of nature can be observed each time history takes a new direction. And if more and more today we have begun to doubt that man must dominate nature, or on the other hand that he must submit to it, as is the case in other types of culture, and if we have begun to believe that he must live in harmony with nature, then are we not on the verge of an extremely important mutation? We can already detect the existence of a definite coherence between the non-subordination of individuals, groups and countries and the non-domination and non-exploitation of nature. Expressed in a positive fashion, these new representations and values lead to self-liberation, self-autonomy and self-management, and beyond that, to an increasing responsibility towards oneself, others and towards nature. This is evidently at variance with the instituted culture on which our societies base themselves.

To point out these new desires and practices is also to say that they are colliding with all the weight of the institutions of domination, with conformist mentalities and with tremendous interests acquired by the power elites. As of yet, nothing is won; the imperialisms draw back from the exterior and within their own national borders only with great resistance. Real crises and those which they will provoke serve as pretexts to suppress dissidents and to legitimize the existing order. However, the other side of the coin does not appear as gloomy. If this cultural revolution has truly begun, then it means that, as Gramsci remarked in regard to culture, the fabric of society, the representations and values which hold its elements together, has already begun to tear and disintegrate. This is as true for the USSR as it is for the USA.

Be that as it may, all those who do not wish to adapt to the present, who can no longer find guides among intellectual leaders to direct them toward some Eden, who no longer possess an Arcadia towards which they could point their compass, these individuals owe it to themselves to reassume their autonomy, and to exercise it at all levels and in all sectors of their lives. This implies that the idea of progress on which our societies have lived for more than two centuries must be radically revised. Such a change of course can be expressed by the following: the appropriation of nature by man must be subordinated to man's appropriation of his own nature, which becomes the finality around which the others are ordered. Thus politics, taken in its widest sense, must subsume the economic; we will be led to distinguish civil society, political society and the State. And in contrast to other thinkers, both liberal and socialist, we do not have in mind the ideal of a transparent society where the State, politics and law would be abolished because they would no longer be necessary. Rather we conceive of a society in which the contradictions and varied interests of life in society would be recognized, but where they would also be managed in the most realistic way possible. Since the liberal and socialist societies actually existing in this, the latter part of the twentieth century, have arrived at the limits of their possibilities, it no longer seems possible to patch them here and there. On the other hand, if one agrees with Pierre Rosanvallon in thinking that Adam Smith's

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successor is Marx himself, then it will be no surprise to find that Bahro's criticism of present day socialism is akin to the criticism which Marcuse, among others, had already aimed at existing advanced capitalism. To arrive at such a relation, Smith must first be perceived not as the herald of the bourgeoisie, nor as the apostle of nascent capitalism, but as the one who, in the eighteenth century, formulated economic ideology which is not capitalist practice. According to Smith, the economic is no longer incorporated into the social but rather the latter into the former; the market, says Rosanvallon, becomes a mechanism of social organization more so than one of economic regulation. Furthermore, and of equal importance:

Liberalism, as the ideology of the market, is asserted in this manner in the struggle to deterritorialize the economy and to construct a flexible and homogeneous space, structured only by the geography of prices.⁹

Transnationals carry this movement to an extreme by deterritorializing not only the economy but politics and culture as well. In this new organization of society,

The State accompanies the individual's assertion as a sufficient subject, collecting the dividends of a cultural mutation which it helped accelerate, indeed create, with respect to religion, equally implying the autonomization of individual in regard to the intermediary forms of sociability.¹⁰

Opinion polls, so popular today, have become the means of achieving Bentham's panoptic.

The strength of the science of wealth was to produce an international 'culture' going beyond all political divisions (. . .) the market was to become the new *patria communis* of humanity.¹¹

According to Rosanvallon, Marx's close ties to Smith stem from his having confused the practice of capitalism in the nineteenth century with liberal ideology.

It is not enough, he writes, to expose the disfunctioning of the market's economy and to proceed to a 'scientific' analysis of the logic of capitalism in order to break with the liberal utopia. Liberalism, in fact, cannot be reduced to an economic doctrine of *laissez-faire*. More profoundly, it implies a representation of politics and society paradoxically common to social theories recognized as antagonistic. It is actually the common core from which most modern representations of

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society have developed. It is in this sense that Marx is, in my opinion, Smith's successor. (. . .) The problem posed for us is in fact one of a *global transcendence of modernity*. There will be no radical transformation of society if this is not clarified by a representation of the world which expels liberalism from our minds.¹²

Rosanvallon only retains from 'liberalism' that which he calls the legal State and the extension of men's rights. In this respect, the decline of the State advocated by Marx is nothing more than the consequence of political decline. It is no longer a matter of aiming to achieve a transparent society where politics, the State, law and whatever else would be banished.

To be freed from utopian liberalism is to conceive of political society in its double difference with the State and with civilian society; it is to autonomize (we remain sceptical in this regard) and to particularize the political domain, not to dissolve it. It is also to say that democracy can develop only with the recognition of the irreducibility of social division and conflict; furthermore, it is to understand democracy as a never-ending battle of difficulties with its object, rather than as a transitory reality. In a word, it is to return to politics. This condition being met, we may be able to cease being orphans of lost illusions, to continue struggling day after day for a present which would no longer be simply the expectation of and preparation for a great dream; *we would be certain, like the poet, that our heritage was not preceded by any testament*.¹³ (our emphasis)

It goes without saying that the few general remarks which we will formulate with respect to Canada and Québec will take into account these notions of civil, political and State society. Indeed, it seems that these two entities, because of the numerous contradictions which appear in them as well as because of their pluralism, can serve as fertile matter for discussion, more so than in unitarian countries such as the USA. We will also take this opportunity to discuss the role of political parties and social movements as well as the relations which they could and should maintain. In this way it can be seen that the most important proceedings are skirted, in Canada as much as in Québec. In latter years, the Québec question has been brought to the attention of a vast public, but because the debate has tended to be monopolized by political parties — who wish to seize control of the State — the political questions have largely been discussed according to the holding of power rather than for themselves. This is even more the case in the United States where politicians are interested only in power and shamelessly let this be known.

Evidently one must examine what the evolution of capitalist as well as

socialist societies has produced from the point of view of civil society, the State and political society. Our survey will be brief concerning actually existing socialism: the State has incorporated everything; the expression and discussion of choices of society are not tolerated at any level, be it civil or political. The debate between Marx and Bakunin was resolved a long time ago: statism won hands down. Truly, anarchism represented the only other solution, and this alternative must be transcended. The question is more complex in capitalist societies and at first glance one might believe that they present a greater range of choices. The stakes of the February 18, 1980 election were described by a Canadian journalist in the following way: the object was to see if Canadians had the right to change governments. When it is realized that hardly any difference exists between the two parties likely to take power and that one believes supremacy to be God-given, then the choices of Canadians are reduced to their simplest expressions. We could reasonably say that through the increasing industrialization and urbanization of our countries, not only has political society disappeared, but civil society itself has been eroded and disintegrated by the State and the actions of its institutions. André Gorz wrote the following comment, which would seem to be fitting:

The break between production and consumption, working life and 'leisure' results from the destruction of autonomous capacities in favour of the capitalist division of labour. It allows the sphere of market relations to be perpetuated and extended: since the worker has been deprived of any possibility of choosing the aim and nature of his paid labour, the sphere of freedom becomes that of non-labour; however, any creative or productive activity having a social impact is prohibited during his free time; his freedom is limited to choices between things to be consumed and positive amusements.¹⁴

Subsequently the author demonstrates that the destruction of autonomous capacities begins at school, where specialization and the division of knowledge are taught. If we take *civil society* to mean "the fabric of social relations established between individuals within groups or communities who owe their existence neither to the mediation nor the institutional acknowledgement of the State,¹⁵ then it becomes evident that these communities are dissolved by a melting-pot effect in populations and through the ever-increasing fragmentation of populations. Thus heteronomy and hetero-regulation predominate.

Political society, where citizens debate societal choices, has been taken under the wing of the State's political parties. As a consequence, all those who participate in activities, whose sole object is to retain or attain power, only discuss the issues they believe to be electorally profitable. Publicity and propaganda prevail; in the same way seduction rules rather than the expression and discussion of important political choices. In fact, this is so much the case that when all is said and done, people have little choice, both in capitalist and

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socialist countries. Some of our readers will no doubt be wondering if it is truly necessary to follow such a roundabout route and to question so many notions and practices in order to discuss relations between Canada and Québec. But if, as we maintain, it is, in the final analysis, a political question, that is to say, the collective life of the community, and if this life has become thoroughly heteronomized, then in order to win Canada's autonomy in relation to the United States and that of Québec with regard to Canada, we must debate this question at great length. Otherwise, how are people to conceive of national autonomy, people who have abandoned their own autonomy as well as that of their communities and collectives, and who expect everything from others? There, as elsewhere, can be seen the tendency to turn to specialists, to constitutionalists, such as Senator Forsey, to economists of the Conference Board, in order to determine the domination and dependence of one's country.

At this point in our observations, we must forestall any misunderstanding. Faced with the failure of existing socialism and the increasingly serious crises assailing capitalist societies, many people, ourselves included, are denouncing the State's grip on collective life and do not hesitate to actively criticize political parties. Stemming from these accusations, movements labelled as the "New Right" have appeared in a number of countries. Such groups are demanding a return to free enterprise, an end to State control, action against dissidents of all kinds, and in what appears to be their common foundation, a return to biologism and racism which were thought buried with Nazism. Although these new movements manifest the uneasy and critical state of our society which we too have observed, their solutions clearly take the opposite view from our own. Furthermore, they appear to be far too easy; unfortunately there is an age-old tendency to attempt to overcome society's contradictions through war, the revival of authority and the repression of dissidents. Worst of all, the populations who have already given up their autonomy and freedom in their lives and communities follow their new saviours. Erich Fromm labelled this as the "escape from freedom". Clearly, as we have already implied, we have been conditioned by our societies to entrust others with the responsibility of doing things for us. The generalized vicariate-like state of our societies compels us ineluctably towards the delegation of functions, authority and even enjoyment. All of the power elites are continuously occupied with stripping people of knowledge, skills, desires and dreams. We live in a universe of needs and are constantly producing new specialists to fulfill them. New needs are incessantly being created, and a pretence is made of inquiring if people experience them; it is then announced that these needs can be met, and for only a minimal extra charge. And thus the world goes on.

The question we must deal with is precisely the opposite of the one posed to the power elites: How can each individual, each community, each nation regain enough autonomy to be self-determining? How does one escape the vicious circle of needs — which give birth to those who dominate to continue to dominate — and finally reach the desires, the possibilities of another life, another society? Our response is demanding of one and all, but we believe it

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possible to find a way out of this impasse only through respecting the possibility of transcendence present in each of us. If this respect for the individual and the possibility of creating another world did not exist, one might as well throw in the towel, adopt the perspective of Mr. Lougheed or Mr. Ryan or join some new kind of Pépin-Robarts Commission. For this reason, our remarks are not directed towards political men with their eyes riveted on power, but rather towards the men and women of this country who have already begun to question their own lives, the life of their communities and of their country. We would tell them that it is better to live their dreams than to spend their lives in a dream. What did Nixon dream of? — Power. What does Pierre E. Trudeau dream of? Retaining power, winning it once again. Our optimism regarding the outcome of our struggle stems from a certain knowledge: we know that north of the 49th parallel, perfectly ordinary people, poets, artists, and all the others continuously harassed by our society have not only already begun to envisage other ways to live, within their own private lives, which they are encouraged to dream about, as well as in their life with others, but have also begun to live their dreams. Those who forever have the words of the people and democracy on their lips believe in them the least; in both types of society, Russian and American, people end up, through the endless delegation of power, believing only in the party, then in the party's elite, and ultimately, in its leader. In the election of February, 1980, the Liberals gave a graphic demonstration of this. To display the leader or to conceal him? This was one of the most agonizing questions asked by senior members of both parties. Yet crocodile tears are shed over the apathy of the people, over their loss of interest in politics.

What, then, is at the core of the matter? What are we getting at? It is as simple as this: to change their lives, men and women must want the change; they must conceive of other ways of living their daily lives and their existence in society and then make this reality. It was Hegel who said that if the imaginary world is revolutionized, then reality will not be far behind. If, in fact, what must be done is no longer to be found in the works of intellectual leaders, if the unchecked economic growth and the technological developments which propel and promote transnationals only serve to transform men and women into appendages, even more uniform across continents, of those marvellous machines which regulate our lives, then it remains for us to conceive of something else. And in order to do that, we can only count on those who want to make something else of their lives, on groups and communities which have already commenced desiring and realizing another life.

Every society, every culture, by means of its ideological apparatus, instills in its members through the family, school and other instances, certain ideas and values concerning the right way to live and the right kind of society. Today, the extraordinarily developed means of mass communication daily distribute explicit or implicit messages which feed the consciousness of the people; in fact it is precisely because of this that they are called the consciousness industries. In addition to transmitting representations and values, these industries feed imaginary social reality, that is to say they establish enclosures within which

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imagination and desires can move. But if imagination is a function shared by all, its content — the imaginary social — differs among peoples, classes and other groups. The imaginary social is therefore always situated and dated, as much by its content as by the time to which it gives importance; the golden age could be present, past, or future depending on the society and culture. Among other things, the imaginary social defines what is held to be desirable and undesirable, probable and improbable, realistic and unrealistic, possible and impossible. The possible is, in our view, the most important category, as well as being the most laden with meaning because it stems from a given reality which it must transcend in order to bring about another one.

If a society can be judged by the type of information to which it gives importance, it can be judged as much, if not more so, by the information it conceals. Thus our societies, believing only in what can be measured, favour cybernetics or signal-type information, i.e. economic-type information described by the economist Jacques Attali as being the poorest type:

The signal, he states, is only valued by the response which follows. Information in such a view of society is as important as (but not more than) the traffic lights which govern the roads. From the moment we move to higher levels of observation, information becomes much more complex and cannot be evaluated.¹⁶

Attali identifies other types of information as semantic or discourse, semiological or symbol, unconditional or relation, which are held to be of secondary importance in our society. The American economist Kenneth Boulding has arrived at approximately the same conclusion:

The fundamental weakness of the economic-type analysis applied to essentially non-economic social systems is precisely that it neglects those aspects of behaviour which are not economic but rather heroic, or more exactly, identity-creating.¹⁷

The above quotations from economists serve to demonstrate how certain information is favoured, information which does not take into account the most important aspects of society. In assessments which have been made of the seventies, and in predictions for the eighties, it has almost exclusively been a question of two cumulative processes — economy and technology. From such a perspective, those who are interested in other phenomena — political and cultural ones — are considered to be “soft” compared to those “hard” people who transmit statistics and graphs. It is not surprising that in this kind of society, the imaginary social is completely oriented towards growth and development. Those who manipulate us by producing and selling material and symbolic goods

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want us to dream, to escape from ourselves, but only as isolated and fragmented individuals because they only know consumers who, on an individual basis only, belong to the market society where everything, men and objects, is transformed into merchandise.

To break this domination and alienation is to leave heteronomy, i.e. the state in which others produce our lives and even our dreams. It is also to come out of a logic of equivalency — one of economics — which transforms social actors into “inert crowds, groupings of consumers, electors, spectators, users” for whom “the world of private objects (. . .) tends to take charge of the greatest possible number of desires”. Such a taking in hand constantly postpones the moment of reaching the other side, that of transition, the creation of another type of society.¹⁹

If we speak of autonomy and imperialism, of the need for two nations, Québec and Canada, it is because we believe that ultimately, “opting out of the empire”, this autonomy and responsibility which we assume with regard to ourselves, others and nature, is the course we must follow. Furthermore, it appears increasingly evident that it is no longer a matter of patching the status quo in order for it to continue. Rather, new possibilities must be made to arise and must be progressively achieved. It is perhaps the task of smaller nations like ours, which have fewer acquired interests to defend than others, to dare to imagine another life, another society. Rather than relying on fear and security, we must turn to the creative faculties harbored by this northern sub-continent which Canada and Québec form. Moreover, in opposition to those in Ottawa who would bureaucratize Canada — *ad mari usque ad mare* — and to those politicians who fiercely defend their acquired bits of power, it seems that often, albeit accidentally, the dynamic groups of these countries, youth, women, artists, and others who are oppressed — workers who earn their living only to lose it — all these groups subscribe to the idea of another life and society. But where to begin? We believe that it has already commenced and that it is rather a question of amplifying what already exists, of seeking out other possibilities and especially of getting the political — everything concerning the collective life of a nation — out of the hands of politicians to make it everyone's business: recreating, then, political society. Some would say that today, less than ever, is the time to question ourselves; at the time of the rise of dangers and ayatollahs, from Carter, through Ryan to Khomeini, we must, more so now than ever, have confidence in our highest leader. The problem is that according to the discourse of power, it is never the moment. When all goes well, when the empire is expanding, while the machines which produce and dehumanize us drone on, we are told: What are you complaining about? Things have never been better! And when the machines go awry, as they are doing today, we are told: Support your leader! Otherwise our enemy will prevail. And it is in this way that systems are maintained, private capitalism as well as State capitalism.

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