



*CHRONICLE OF THREE
YEARS OF STRUGGLE OF
THE SOCIALIST DEPUTIES*

TO REVIVE CULTURE

BY MICHÈLE VICTORY, ON 06 . 05 . 2020
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CHRONICLE OF THREE YEARS OF STRUGGLE OF THE SOCIALIST DEPUTIES: TO BRING CULTURE BACK TO LIFE

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On May 6, 2020, Michèle Victory, an op-ed published on May 6, 2020 in the Huff Post.

Mr. Prime Minister,

During his hearing before the Cultural Affairs Committee of the National Assembly, your Minister of Culture reiterated that "culture is essential to our democracy". Yet during your last speech to the national representation, you largely relegated it to mere social interactions.

So one question burns on our lips, Mr. Prime Minister: is it really so essential in the eyes of your Government?

Do you consider it to be part of the narrative that humans have woven century after century, taming the elements imposed by a profane nature and questioning ever more strongly the validity and boundaries of stereotypes and dominant systems in our organization?

That it is fundamental in individual expression, that it opens infinite paths of freedom and invention, that it draws collective dreams and proposes original and new readings of the world?

That it is indispensable to support our human condition so unsatisfactory in its absurdity and the frustration of a sometimes brutal daily life, deaf to our anger?

Essential the culture then, of course. And above all, by and for those who make it, wear it, weave it and live from it. For those whose daily life is not part of a regular pattern, but of a work in the long course of construction. For all this multitude of trades and skills; those highlighted and the others that we cannot even imagine but without which nothing that we see or hear would exist.

And yet, in the third month of a totally new and devastating crisis, culture is being hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic. Whether they are salaried, independent, associative, or intermittent, all these culture-makers find themselves annihilated by a cascade of cancellations and closures of shows and cultural venues. Already in fragile and often precarious situations - 50% of the artists live below the poverty line - they have seen, for the last three months, their rights linked to the exploitation and distribution of their works collapse, their contracts not honoured and they find themselves without any remuneration.

For more than 270,000 artist-authors, for almost 260,000 casual entertainment workers and for 1.3 million cultural actors, a social crisis is looming. Yes "they are worried", and that is a sad euphemism in the mouth of your minister.

The urgency is therefore that of massive financial support to the cultural world. The entire sector is asking you for it, in the form of a "white year" scheme that takes over the identical compensation for a period of at least one year.

On the other hand, the measures from which these professions are supposed to benefit, such as short-time working or access to the solidarity fund, do not fit their reality. They require administrative adjustments.

Added to this is a lack of clarity regarding the resumption of cultural events, this vagueness prevents artists from getting involved again in the initiation of new projects and projecting themselves in the more or less near future. They need a fixed, concerted and reassuring framework.

Finally, this crisis can only be overcome through trust and dialogue with the professional organizations, which are making a number of concrete proposals on how to correct these systems that have become inadequate to the realities of their professions.

Then there will always be the tenacious idea that this life of "acrobats", after all, they chose it! Chosen because they are passionate and committed. However, this cannot condemn them to remain an adjustment variable in political discourse: 25 million euros in aid to Culture when billions are rightly granted to the economy... Allow us to remind you, Mr. Minister, that culture contributes seven times more to the GDP than the automobile industry! It is not, of course, a question of putting the energies and investment of our fellow citizens in the diversity of their professions or missions in competition with each other. For all that, it is also important to remember that culture is not just an ornament "on top of the market" and that it also takes on a share of subversion that we have no interest in allowing to run aground unfiltered in everyday life.

So, Mr. Minister, we can only hear the word "essential" that your Minister of Culture repeats, not now backed by a vast plan to save and restart the cultural world, in support of all those who have accompanied us in our confined days and who continue to make us travel beyond loneliness, illness and fears.