

## MONUMENTS AND SOCIETY

*Vladimir IVANOV*

*Rapporteur General*

In the earliest centuries of their existence, human societies created means of production which made it possible by a variety of processes to improve material living conditions and raise the level of spiritual life. A large portion of man's spiritual culture is to be found expressed in decorative art, which generally took the form of objects for everyday use — pottery, embroideries, carpets, woven goods, etc.

Now that life has existed for millions of years, works of art have come to form what we may call the "golden treasury" of human culture. Not all works have survived their creators; but to those which have been preserved we give the name of "historical monuments and monuments of past cultures".

There are many reasons for the disappearance of parts of the cultural heritage, and in all countries there have been periods of disaster. Thus the French very rightly say: "The Restoration period cared nothing at all about the restoration of monuments"; indeed it was not until after the 1830 Revolution that men of enlightenment in France had measures introduced to preserve cultural property. Subsequently Prosper Mérimée, as Inspector General for the Protection of Monuments, devoted a large part of his ceaseless activity to the task.

Were it to lose its monuments completely, society would be incapable of any correct appreciation of the progress accomplished in the course of its historical development. It would be deprived of the experience of its past, and as a result its progress would be slower.

Failure to understand the influence of monuments on the culture of present and future generations is the most dangerous of the possible causes of such loss. One of the most common reasons for such lack of understanding is the idea that the effect of the past on progress is to slow it down and that ancient buildings have an adverse effect on urban development, since they prevent the populations from enjoying up-to-date living facilities, while they also encourage the persistence of out-of-date ideas.

The great thinkers have often stressed the overwhelming importance of all the cultural wealth created by their ancestors for humanity. Lenin declared that Karl Marx, before founding his materialist philosophy, had examined and studied all that is precious in human thought and in culture. Speaking of what would be the culture of the future in the new Soviet society, Lenin here again recalled that this would live and develop only if it had its basis in accurate knowledge and in "the culture that has grown up ever since humanity started to evolve".

One of the principal tasks to which national and international institutions for the protection of monuments should devote their activity is the enlightening of public opinion on the problems connected with conservation and on the importance of the role to be assigned to monuments in general. History in fact provides us with certain instances where we see society objecting to the damaging or destruction of monuments; thus, in the 5th century, the Roman Emperor Majorian published the following edict: "Firmly resolved to put an end to the excesses resulting from indifference, we, as Sovereign of the Empire, note that on the pretext of responding to a social need, the ancient edifices which make the beauty of the Eternal City are being criminally razed to the ground. Landlords are with impunity tearing down the monuments of the glorious past, where on the contrary love for their country should lead them to provide for their protection".

The edict went on to proclaim that all buildings put up by the Ancients were inviolable. Those who disobeyed it were fined fifty pounds of gold, and civil servants guilty of connivance were sentenced to be whipped and to have their hands cut off.

In October 1793 the Convention of Revolutionary France passed a decree on the protection of monuments and gave a definition of the treatment to be afforded them, and of their artistic, historical and educational value.

Each of us will doubtless be able to find in the past history of his people and his country records of numerous instances where measures were taken for the protection and conservation of cultural property and historical monuments. In Russia, in the 15th century, an architect who had been ordered to restore a very fine cathedral dating from the beginning of the 13th century in the town of Yuriev-Polski, was obliged to rebuild it as it had been before its destruction. In the 18th century, Peter the Great issued a decree on the protection of the Russian war fleet which for its general character may be compared with the decree of the Emperor Majorian.

However, all of these administrative measures had very limited effects, for lack of systematic propaganda or measures to educate the population. A conscious and fierce struggle to protect monuments went on during the First World War (1914-1921), when Rheims Cathedral and Louvain University were among the buildings destroyed. The Russian painter Nicolas Rerikh raised his voice in energetic protest, and his appeal to the

governments of the warring countries received wide support from humanists the world over.

The Soviet Government, shortly after its creation during the Great October Revolution, published an appeal to the citizens of Russia in which it defined its position in relation to the problems of conserving the cultural heritage. This ran:

"Citizens, the former overlords have gone and have left us a great heritage which now belongs to the people.

"Citizens, preserve this heritage, preserve the pictures, the statues, the buildings: they are the incarnation of your might and of the spiritual might of your ancestors. Art is the beauty which men of talent were able to create under the yoke of despotism and which testifies to the beauty and might of the human personality.

"Citizens, do not touch a single stone, preserve the monuments, the buildings, the antiquities, the writings; they are the soil on which your new people's art will grow".

A little later, on 5th October, 1918, the Council of People's Commissars passed a decree entitled "On the inventorying and protection of works of art and historical monuments".

This decree provided for a system of registering and inventorying monuments. In reality it was the first programme of organized care for monuments to be adopted in the Soviet Union.

The Second World War of 1939-1945, started, as we know, by the fascists, caused the destruction of a large number of cultural treasures. The monuments of London, of many French towns, of Poland, of Czechoslovakia, of Yugoslavia and of many places in the U.S.S.R. which the fascist armies occupied, were destroyed through the action of forces whose government policy was based on a direct negation of humanism.

Each people's ancient monuments testify to the spiritual life of its ancestors. Our own generation is responsible for keeping its monuments unspoilt, and it is undertaking to preserve so rich a heritage and to hand it down to future generations.

The preamble to the Venice Charter adopted at the 11th International Congress of Artists and Technicians of Historic Monuments (1964) gives clear and accurate expression to the idea that the protection of monuments is an essential prerequisite for any humanist culture. Obviously the problem of protecting monuments cannot be envisaged outside the context of humanism and world progress, and thus every organization concerning itself with this problem must interpret the principles on which its activity is based as those of humanism.

There are various ways in which the conservation of the cultural heritage may be undertaken; our own organization, ICOMOS, is concerned with the international solutions to the problem.

The setting up of international committees and commissions of experts and the holding of symposiums and meetings of a scientific nature are means of bringing together specialists to draw up recommendations which will contribute, if implemented, to the conservation of monuments and their repair for cultural ends. As we know, UNESCO and the UNESCO General Conference are showing a great deal of sympathetic interest in problems of conservation, which they consider to be an integral part of cultural problems in general. It is sad that for economic and sometimes sociological reasons certain States should be unable to carry out the recommendations of the international bodies.

From our experience of each country we see that there can be two parallel and complementary systems for protecting monuments, the private one and the State one. The State system of protection is based on legislation and, to a certain extent, on coercion and penalties. Such legislation exists in most States and its enforcement has involved the creation of departments coming under the Ministry of Culture, for instance, or the Ministry of Public Buildings, according to the country.

However, public or private bodies already existed prior to such legislation. Of the countries where land and buildings are in private hands, Britain is the one which provides us with the most interesting example of a private system of protection. Founded in 1895, the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty has done more than the State itself towards the protection of monuments and natural sites. In 1966 this organization had 157,000 members and next to the State it is the biggest landowner in the country. The Trust owns 700 monuments and finances the "Wildlife Conservation Scheme", which covers 108 areas where vegetation and wild life are protected. The organization draws no profits from its estates and the only "income" its members receive is the moral satisfaction of contributing to the safeguarding of natural and cultural treasures and the right of free admission to the museums and other buildings owned by the Trust. The Trust is very widely known in England and has acquired even greater popularity since "Enterprise Neptune", which was an operation consisting in the purchases of stretches of land along the English and Welsh coasts as yet neither built on nor enjoying State protection.

There are other types of organization for the protection of monuments whose aims are more limited, for example the association for the protection of the historic quarters of Paris and the optimum development of their potentialities. The founders of this association state that its aims are not merely to arouse the interest of the Parisians in the history of their city, but also to make the Twenty-First Century Town as attractive and magnificent as its Nineteenth and Twentieth Century predecessors. Of a number of districts (St-Germain-des-Prés, the Montagne Sainte Geneviève, etc.), the Marais has been chosen as an experimental area for the tentative solution of problems of modernization. The Association, under the patronage of the public authorities, has already carried out a series of operations,

and we are happy to know that the ICOMOS headquarters is to be housed in the Marais district, in the outbuildings of an ancient private mansion (the Hôtel St-Aignan in the Rue du Temple) which are being specially fitted out for the purpose.

In countries where land and housing properties are not in private hands, the State sets up the requisite departments. There are also State research institutes coming under these departments, as well as specialized institutes for restoration projects, and restoration workshops. It is with great satisfaction that one learns of the activities of such departments in Poland, where they have brilliantly distinguished themselves by their reconstruction of their capital, Warsaw. In 1967, on the kind invitation of the National Committee of Czechoslovakia, we were able to see the remarkable work done to enhance the ancient centres of the towns of that country. We shall be having an opportunity of introducing those who are present at this symposium to the restoration work carried out in and around Leningrad after the destruction caused during the last war.

In the Republics of the Soviet Union, building operations have developed very rapidly as a result of economic and social progress and it has become essential to draw the attention of public opinion to the need to protect monuments. Societies for the protection of ancient and historical monuments have been set up in all Republics, following the example first of Georgia and then of the Republic of Russia. The basic aim of these associations is to assist the State institutions, and this they do in a great variety of ways. For example, an association may provide financial contributions and, if the government subsidy is inadequate, its members may contribute to the work of restoration. Their main task, however, is to raise the level of historical knowledge in general and to influence public opinion in favour of conservation and restoration. The members of these associations further interest themselves very closely in the work of preparing and wording recommendations on the adaptation of monuments for cultural or tourist purposes and their integration into modern life.

Unlike those of Western Europe, the Soviet associations for the protection of monuments have a mass membership. For example, the Society for the Protection of Monuments of the Republic of Russia has 3,500,000 members, and the associations of the Soviet Union taken together have a membership of about nine millions.

These associations are groups of people interested in the conservation of monuments and their integration into modern life as a means of moral elevation and of enrichment of the inner self. But there can quite well be other types, too; the form of the association must be chosen in the light of the concrete conditions of life in the country. In the Soviet Union the work of protecting monuments has a humanist basis, in that the aim is to use them as a method of education in art and a means of raising the cultural level of the population and creating a mass feeling of respect for the past and a desire to understand the future.

The cultural heritage is part of the culture of each new generation and of society in general, which is always in the process of development. This heritage will enrich the intelligence of the generation which comes after a thing, which would not be conceivable without assimilation of the experience of those which came earlier, though most people do not realize this. The culture of each generation is preserved in part in the generation which follows and gradually crystallizes to form the "solid gold" of popular traditions.

Monuments are also an extremely valuable instrument of communication between peoples and a means of engendering feelings of mutual respect. It was first noticed a long time ago that works of art created within a given national environment, though they expressed the ideas and feeling of their own age, also appealed to the emotions of other peoples of other nationalities and other ages. Its capacity of expressing within a national setting feelings which are universally accessible means that a monument may be used as a powerful source of mutual understanding between one people and another, and an encouragement to friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance.

It is easy, at an advanced stage in historical development, to distinguish those elements in the works of previous generations which corresponded to the sociological interests of the age and have therefore "dated", and those which are of interest for our time owing to their permanent character. Abu Simbel, the Alhambra, the Taj Mahal, the Athenian Acropolis, the Pantheon in Rome, the Moscow Kremlin, Notre-Dame in Paris, and many others as well, are artistic masterpieces which awake our respect for the peoples which nourished the noble ideals they embody and gave the world masters capable of expressing with such talent and such grandeur the material and spiritual culture of their age.

Paris, Kiev, Prague, Dubrovnic, Budapest, Veliko-Tirnov, Venice, Leningrad, Moscow, Cairo, Samarkand — each of these has its own peculiar architectural character and each creates in us an irresistible desire to go back and find ourselves once again in its special climate, so extraordinary for the emotions and the intellect. Historical monuments and other monuments of the past are an instrument and a stimulant for mutual understanding between the peoples of the world and for deeply-felt respect for the cultural treasures of their past and present.

It is a well-known fact that half of the tourist trade in any country is connected with its monuments. The desire to see the ancient buildings of foreign countries with one's own eyes inevitably involves a desire for knowledge of the history of the peoples who built them, and here we have another aspect of the place of the cultural heritage in modern society. It is not always possible, over a short period, to assess the influence of monuments on the formation of traditions. We do know, however, that the rejection of all Greek and Roman culture by the apologists of Christianity determined from many points of view the ideology of the

Middle Ages, which was to predominate for several centuries in Europe. In some countries there are groups of intellectuals who now reject their own cultural heritage and proclaim that art is above class or nation. If this point of view were to become the accepted one, the human race would come to do away with national cultures, and we feel that this would mean an impoverishment of humanity, which would become incapable of creating a genuine international culture. The meaning of "international" is closely linked with the concept of humanity, and the concept of humanity has never conflicted with the idea of "national".

We would like to stress, when considering the influence of the cultural heritage on the formation of national traditions, that only the progressive aspects of that heritage should be retained. To make a fetish of tradition is a symptom of economic failure, of a degenerate culture and, ultimately, of the decadence of a nation. Whereas the development of traditions that are progressive will create the original culture of a country and be an encouragement to popular art. Here we may cite as an example the rise of the national cultures of the peoples which make up the Soviet Union. The skilled Armenian architects who rebuilt Erevan, the capital of their Republic, took their cue from their traditional national architecture. They exploited all the acquisitions of modern science and modern technology and met the demands of up-to-date comfort, and they created new forms which are an embodiment of the progress of their national humanist culture.

The material setting — large or small town, buildings, monuments, and public parks — within which men live, is of very considerable importance for the formation of the aesthetic ideal of the nation and its relationship with the cultural heritage.

The monuments of the past are the result of the spiritual and material activity of former generations; they can engender in the human consciousness the idea of an international cultural community. It is in the interest of humanity to preserve every nation, whatever it may be, and to develop its culture, and this means that the highly-developed countries must provide practical assistance for the purpose of preserving the monuments of those nations which have not yet reached the same social and cultural level.

During the first centuries of historical times man's idea of the world generally took shape and developed in the light of his religious beliefs. Religion explained the origin of the world and of man and laid down rules of conduct and aesthetic and ethical notions. Thus the architect or painter mainly expressed his views and conceptions in terms of the religion which dominated at the time. The relics of the past which are the best preserved are, in architecture, the cathedrals and monasteries, in sculpture the figures of gods and saints, and in painting the representations of religious subjects and myths. The walls of fortified towns and the castles are less well preserved, and homes and trading premises less so still, and such differences in the degree of conservation up to the present day may create a false impression of the way social and cultural trends develop.

The archaeological excavations of these past decades have in fact somewhat changed the orientation of the study of monuments and their conservation. The attention of scholars is being attracted more and more by all that has surrounded man in his life at the successive stages in his development, and if one adopts this point of view it is essential to retain a few architectural units or even whole parts of towns where one might have been tempted to destroy certain buildings felt to be "non-typical" or "inartistic".

Closer study of monuments in the light of the history of humanity will enable us to assess more correctly the value of certain among them and to discover the correlations between the monuments of each age and the social consciousness of that age and its conception of the world.

It is for this reason that we feel it to be so important to undertake a theoretical study of the highest, national and international categories, (first and second) of monuments. Prosper Mérimée noted, on the subject of the monuments of Corsica, that none of these could be compared with those of France or Italy, and he concluded, with the perspicacity typical of him: "Not all peoples were able to produce big architectural works in the Middle Ages, for that is possible only where the people are religious, the clergy rich and the feudal overlords fond of lavish things". A great many peoples have had an extremely difficult history and the development of their culture has not kept pace with that achieved in the world's larger centres, so that their monuments are not of the same artistic standard. Yet such monuments are unique of their kind for a study of the history of national cultures, and for an understanding of their country's historical development they are of outstanding value; if there could be an international jurisdiction on the subject they would have as much right to be protected as the rest. It is precisely for this reason that we feel there is need to develop and emphasize the idea expressed in the Venice Charter on the use of the term "monument"; it should designate not only major buildings but also more modest ones which as time goes on acquire a cultural value of their own.

We shall see, if we take as our principal criterion for the assessment of a monument its social value and the educational potentialities within it which contribute to the formation of humanist ideas, that it can be a potent means of shaping the consciousness of man.

Monuments are of the greatest importance in the educational field. Historical monuments and monuments of the past help to awaken a spirit of that true patriotism which rejects chauvinism and hostility to other men. The Russian will thus learn to be proud of the monuments of Rome and the Italian of the Moscow Kremlin and the other monuments of Russia.

In summing up, we would like to present the following conclusions:

1. From the social point of view the conservation of monuments is not an end in itself. The monuments of the past are a powerful means of raising the standard of ethical and aesthetic education.

2. The humanistic aspect of the educational role of monuments is of interest to the international community. This role consists in:

a) laying the foundations of mutual understanding between the peoples of the world;

b) awakening and developing mutual respect and striving for international peace.

3. UNESCO has sponsored the preparation of international documents on problems relating to the conservation of monuments and has given practical assistance to a large number of national associations. We feel it would be equally important to adopt a text defining the social role of monuments in the culture of today.

Historical monuments and monuments of the past should be a source of joy and inspiration and contribute to the spiritual enrichment and moral education of the peoples of the world, and in this lies the importance of conservation for the population of all countries.

V. IVANOV,

Vice-Chairman of the Soviet National Committee.