

CLOSING SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF COMOS

Here we are at the close of our symposium on the monuments of the past and society which has brought us together in these most attractive surroundings — this wonderful Theatre of the Hermitage in the historic town of Leningrad.

The success of our meeting was certain from the outset, considering the size and level of distinction of the company taking part. 16 countries are represented here by a total of 71 people from 17 National Committees of ICOMOS, 13 of which have delegated their Chairman or Vice-Chairman. Here is proof enough — if any were required — of the enormous interest aroused by the subject we have been dealing with.

It was not, we must confess, without some hesitation that we accepted the proposal of the Soviet and Yugoslav Committees to embark on a subject of such proportions, at once of such breadth and depth, representing as it does an attempt to draw together into a single whole, as it were, the most secret aspirations of our civilisation. The problem is in fact such that it might be said to form the central foundation or spiritual nucleus of our daily activity as persons in charge of the conservation and enhancement of the cultural heritage in our respective countries. Thus the task is to find that living link between man and his habitat which binds him to the monuments which are part of his surroundings.

A vast subject indeed, and perhaps a little too vast to be dealt with exhaustively in a single meeting; however, the Council agreed to undertake a study of it so as to initiate at least a first contact with a problem whose thorough exploration is a necessity. The remarkable reports we have heard these last few days go a long way towards a preliminary elucidation of the subject and testify to the general interest it arouses everywhere.

It cannot, quite obviously, be my ambition here to give a complete and satisfactory summary of all the important papers which have been read. I will try, however, to gather together the principles enunciated by the orators who have succeeded one another on the platform, so as to give

an overall picture of the proceedings. I must start by asking my hearers, and even more the speakers themselves, to forgive any omissions or inexactitudes of which I may be guilty.

It will perhaps not be superfluous to point out that, though not all the papers read have, it might be observed, kept invariably to the point, the same occurs at all meetings and nothing has in fact been said to no purpose, since the subject we have set ourselves is so vast that questions apparently very much off the point still have a bearing on it.

The report delivered by Mr. Ivanov (U.S.S.R., Vice-President of the Central Council of the Society for the Protection of Monuments of the RSFSR and Vice-President of ICOMOS) is an essential contribution to the subject; by stressing the truly international value of the cultural heritage he has emphasized the eminently spiritual message which monuments have to give us.

Mr. Halturin, Assistant Director of the Central Bureau for Art and the Protection of Monuments and Chairman of the Soviet National Committee of ICOMOS, has examined the extreme importance of monuments and sites of artistic or historical interest as an influence on present-day life, where the blindest sort of intellectual inertia sometimes prevails.

Mr. Makovetski, Head of the National Inspectorate for the Protection of Monuments and Secretary of the Soviet National Committee of ICOMOS, has attempted to define what is meant by "monument of the past" in the sense of a vital factor in man's self-fulfilment.

Mr. Hruska, Chairman of the Prague State Central Commission for the Protection of Historic Monuments and a member of the Czechoslovak National Committee of ICOMOS, has sought to elucidate the question of the relation between centres of historical interest and society through an approach to the subject involving more individual detail.

Mr. Madjarić, Director of the Yugoslav Institute for the Protection of Historical Monuments and Chairman of the Yugoslav National Committee of ICOMOS, who for health reasons has been unable to leave Zagreb, has sent us a report dealing essentially with the problem of how man is to live in harmony with his surroundings and with the inner relationship which exists between man, his natural surroundings and the monuments which are a part of his environment.

Mr. Zdravković, Chief Architect of Historical Monuments and Secretary of the Yugoslav National Committee of ICOMOS, and Mr. Reviakin, one of the Officers of the Central Council of the Society for the Protection of Monuments of the RSFSR (U.S.S.R.), have brought up the important question of the use to be made of monuments and their adaptation to serve practical ends; the problem of revivification is in effect one of the major ones which arise when a restoration project is being examined and its solution involves the devising of a reasonable method for reconciling

the principles of conservation laid down in the Venice Charter requirements of a return to active use.

Mr. Gkiamja, Head of the Lithuanian Department of Muse Monuments and a member of the Soviet National Committee of ICOMOS has told us about the situation obtaining with regard to the conserv enhancement of monuments and sites in his own country. He is primarily with the part which the remains of buildings dating from the past have to play in cultural life and with the importance assigned to con

Mr. Deiters, Director of the Institute for the Protection of Monu the German Democratic Republic, has proposed that the various monuments should be classified under a number of different headings that the methodologies for dealing with them may form an organized system. Mr. de Angelis d'Ossat, Vice-President of the Italian National Council of ICOMOS and one of the official speakers appointed by the Central Bureau, has emphasized the multiple character, at once individual and collective, of the role of monuments, and the growing importance in one country and another, to these cultural testimonies of monuments, especially with a view to their conservation and to their part in the creation of a harmonious setting in which men may live.

Mr. Gabriel Alomar, Chairman of the Spanish National Committee of ICOMOS, has submitted a report on monuments considered - singly, or as parts of integrated units - as necessary factors in the completion of man's educational background.

Mr. Angle, Executive Secretary of the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and the Restoration of Cultural Property, in his paper has dealt with the important question of the educational role of monuments and stressed the usefulness of devising a methodology of some sort which could make for increasing realism and efficiency in this sphere.

Among the most outstanding and also the most precisely worked out papers read we must mention that of Mrs. Hauser, of the Helsinki Board of Building, who is a member of the Finnish National Committee of ICOMOS. The need which she stresses is that of bringing home to people the value of monuments and their message of humani

I must also mention the paper presented by Mr. Monnet, President of the *Compagnie des Architectes-en-Chef* and a member of the French National Committee of ICOMOS. Mr. Monnet has brought up the question of monuments which are to be moved to new locations and stressed extreme prudence called for in such cases. To remove a monument from its original setting is in a sense to mutilate it, to deprive it of the reason for existing. This is one part of the big problem we are concerned with, and the question requires proper assessment so that the extent of its spiritual implications may be defined.

Special importance must also be assigned to the paper read by Mrs. Kamenkova, (Head of the History of Art and Architecture Section

Khamza Fine Arts Institute (Tashkent), and member of the Soviet National Committee of ICOMOS). The subject is a problem which is immediate and urgent in the extreme — and which, incidentally, was the subject chosen for the Second General Assembly of ICOMOS — that of cultural tourism.

I think I am speaking for everyone here when I say how much I regret the absence of Mr. Connally, Head of the Archaeology and History Department of the National Park Service (U.S.A.) and of Mr. Frodl, President of the Austrian Federal Bureau of Historic Monuments and Chairman of the Austrian National Committee of ICOMOS, both of whom are prevented from attending our meeting. We shall shortly be receiving their reports, and you will be able to read these in the published proceedings of this meeting, which will appear as soon as possible.

If the time devoted to work has been a little too short, we must admit that this has been due to the kindness of our hosts, who have been good enough to let us enjoy their monuments and sites to the full. None of us, I am sure, will ever forget our visits to the wondrous Island of Kijy, or to Novgorod with its magnificent bronze gates and its ancient quarters, or to Pushkin and Peterhof with their historic memories and their impressive restoration work. We have been able to observe the high degree of proficiency, the careful prudence and the enormous love for their inspiring task with which our Russian colleagues apply themselves to the conservation and enhancement of their artistic heritage.

The results of this meeting are, I think you will agree, distinctly positive. We have been able to exchange some very useful ideas, profit from new experiences and above all make human contacts at once spontaneous and genuine. We might say, now that we have seen the very special care and accuracy which characterize the research material annexed to the restoration projects for her sites, that Russia possesses, as it were, a "restoration museum". And more than all, we have been able to note the interest taken by the Russian people as a whole in the monuments testifying to its past and the conscientiousness and enthusiasm with which the architects and craftsmen set about their practical restoration work.

We shall go back to our own countries feeling that we are richer beings and carry with us the hope that, if we continue to pursue the policy of active restoration work and to follow the criteria laid down in the Venice Charter, we shall truly succeed in handing on to those who come a better world than the one we have lived in ourselves — a world in which the cultural heritage of the past fulfils a living function and imparts life in its turn.

Permit me now to thank the two committees which organized this symposium, and to thank in particular their *rapporteurs* — Mr. Ivanov for the U.S.S.R. and Mr. Madjarić for Yugoslavia — and the four speakers appointed on the international level — Messrs. Alomar, Connally, de Angelis and Frodl.

I would further like to thank the UNESCO and Rome Centre representatives, Messrs. Daifuku and Angle, for taking part in our work.

It is, finally, a duty and a pleasure to express on behalf of us all our most sincere thanks for their generous hospitality to the Minister of Culture of the U.S.S.R., the Soviet National Committee of ICOMOS and its officers, Messrs. Halturin and Ivanov, the Presidents of the Councils of the Carelian Republic and of the Novgorod Area, the Director of the Hermitage Museum, Mr. Piotrowski, and his eminent assistants, the Directors of the local museums at Kijy, Novgorod, Pushkin and Pavlosk, and the Intourist Agency and the interpreters it provided both during the meetings and on our sightseeing tours. I am leaving to the last, but only in order to express them less formally, the thanks we would all like to offer to Mrs. Masha Zarubeeva, our guardian angel, always available and always ready to help. And once more, our most hearty thanks to the Secretariat of the Soviet National Committee of ICOMOS.

I am going to say: "Au revoir", and wherever we next meet will be our common homeland. *Do svidania.*

Piero GAZZOLA