

INTRODUCTION

In a world which is in a state of upheaval and is desperately trying to find the direction in which it must turn if it is to lose that anxiety which threatens either to paralyse its impulse towards general well-being, or else permanently to preclude any peaceable state of mind, it has been found particularly necessary to hold meetings of the type organized last year in Cacerès by the International Council of Monuments and Sites (or like our present one here in Tunis), for the purpose of working out those guiding principles which will bring greater harmony into man's life in the towns which form the cradle of our civilisation.

Permit me to start by expressing our gratitude to the Tunisian authorities, to the members of the Tunisian National Committee of ICOMOS, and its distinguished President, Mr. Sebaï, to Mr. Tlatli, Deputy-Director of the National Institute of Art and Archaeology, and to Mr. Fendri, Director of the Department of Historical Monuments, together with all his assistants, for the very generous way in which they have devoted their time to the organization of this symposium. It has now become a tradition in the work of our Council to leave aside any desire for spectacular results, and our proceedings are to consist in the bringing together of a limited number of highly qualified experts, for the purpose of making a thorough study of certain given subjects, which they will seek to circumscribe and discuss so as to enable subsequent work on these subjects to continue in the right direction. Our purpose is also to try to coordinate the efforts of all concerned, so as to avoid any useless waste of time and energy and to enable the community as a whole to derive profit from each individual success or failure.

It would be superfluous to stress the importance of the subject we are meeting to discuss here in Tunis : I mean the rescue of man's cultural heritage from the dangers resulting from that chaotic development which has so savagely disfigured the face of our ancient towns, and the preservation

of each national landscape. The phenomenon concerned is too familiar to need dwelling on.

In various special assemblies of highly qualified experts, a large number of speeches have been made on all sides condemning the evil and suggesting divers remedies. The International Council of Monuments and Sites could not remain indifferent to a problem which affects the whole of our civilisation. The danger was felt to be grave and imminent. A first symposium was organized by the Czechoslovak National Committee in 1966 on the problems facing the towns of Europe, at which the "Levoca Resolutions" were adopted, and this meeting was followed by the Cacerès International Symposium, held in Spain in 1967, where the general aspects of the question throughout the world were examined; and now here we are in Tunis to deal with the same problem, thought this time we are taking it specifically in connection with the world of the Islamic tradition. We are in effect dealing with an absolutely individual aspect, which is that of the renovation of ancient towns through the introduction of modern conditions of hygiene, and we must allow for a number of factors arising out of the architectural forms peculiar to the Arab world. Our hosts have collected data for us on the situation in Tunisia and we shall thus be able while we are here to consult a whole body of information on the subject. We shall also have an opportunity of visiting sites in different parts of the country and shall so be able to see results already achieved or in the process of achievement which confirm that the policy chosen was the right one.

The discussion on the reports presented here and on the visits we are going to pay, and also the study of the projects in view or already executed, will show us exactly what progress has been made so far and what our general line should be for any valid future action. We shall thus be able to see what sectors are yet to be explored and draw up a programme of research and of meetings on these.

As you know, the Council of Europe - represented here by one of its distinguished technical advisers, our colleague M. François Sorlin, whom we are honoured to have among us - has made a systematic study of the problem, and has organized a series of discussion meetings, the final one of which is to be held in Avignon next September. Although the Council of Europe is specifically concerned with European problems, its findings will provide a valuable body of data for all those who wish to examine the question in each of the sectors involved.

However, in view of the differences which exist, from one part of the world to another, in the characteristic features of architectural style and even more in the features of whole

units, the problem must be taken area by area, and here the International Council of Monuments and Sites is particularly grateful to the Tunisian authorities, whose hospitality has made it possible to organize this symposium. The working sessions of these coming few days are going to provide us with reliable data which we can then offer to all those who throughout the world - in ever increasing numbers - are asking for clear guidance on a problem which is so immediate and so terribly urgent that it is no longer possible to tolerate its being dropped or set aside for later on.

I would like to express our sincere thanks to UNESCO - represented here by Mr. Selim Abdul Hak, Head of the Monuments and Museums Section - for the valuable assistance it has been kind enough to provide in connection with preparations for this symposium.

I also wish to delay no further before welcoming and thanking on behalf of our Organization Mr. Harold Plenderleith, Director of the International Centre for the Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Property, Mr. Perès Guimaraes, representing the International Union of Architects, Mr. Driss Guiga, delegate of the International Union of Official Travel Organizations, Mr. Fendri, who is to be general rapporteur, and all those experts who have accepted our invitation, in particular those who have kindly agreed to present a report on the preservation of their own countries historical sites. I would like to say how great a pleasure it is for us to have you all here to take part in our proceedings.

(Piero Gazzola)