



FOREWORD

At that particular moment of intense activity in all areas which occurred after the damages of war were repaired, experts in various fields understood the great importance of this meeting in Venice.

In fact, the initiatives permitted by that exceptional economic development were not supported by a cultural commitment that corresponded to the needs of the pressing times and that could be capable of illuminating and directing such a mammoth and unbridled development.

Unfortunately, we are not able to report that the disjunction between economic development and cultural progress has been annulled in recent times; although it must be admitted that today our culture is attempting to adapt to the whirling rhythm of technical advancement. Since the control of the situation is often more apparent than real, it is attended by incoherence and incongruence. Both are conditions that promote sensations of painful and profound uncertainty in man, and cause the individual to feel that he is merely an object tossed about by uncontrollable forces.

Recently in all countries there has been a realization of just how dangerous this disjunction is and of how necessary it is to place material development under the guidance of spiritual values. Also, there has been a realization of just how important the careful conservation of a cultural inheritance is to a human community — to any people who wish to perfect their own humanity and who wish to consider themselves a valid link in that chain which represents the historical continuity of all time.

In this regard, the peoples of the oldest civilizations have had a harsh and useful lesson from those countries which only recently have achieved independence — countries that during the period of dealing with the most serious problems of an immediate nature asserted with great concern and responsibility the basic necessity to protect their own historical and cultural heritage.

The meeting between the leaders of institutions interested both directly and indirectly in the continuing life of the monuments of the past has a fundamental importance today. Only by means of such congresses can an efficacious strategy of rescue be organized, precise plans for protection be formulated, and — each participant having checked his own experience in relation to that of the other members of the group — working techniques be brought up-to-date.

The cultural importance of the monuments of the past is not an idea acquired in our time; rather, it was part of the conspicuous inheritance that we received from our illustrious predecessors, beginning with Vico. Nonetheless until our time, the appreciation of such values has usually been limited to

theorizing. In fact, the endeavour to preserve the patrimony of monuments is a recent obligation and one which distinguishes our epoch from the previous ones.

The more that we are enlightened by experience and made sensitive by improved understanding the more we acknowledge the necessity to assure a vigilant and active defense of this inheritance. The many lacunae — the gaps — that have frustrated or at least weakened laudable intentions demonstrate to us that by considering only the cultural value of the works of the past, we achieve only or above all else a partial recognition of the effective value of these monuments.

The effective utilization of these cultural treasures, the recognition of unavoidable circumstances and of the most effective instrumentation to achieving their restoration is a recent development. It has coincided with a demonstrated truth, that the work of saving such monuments is insufficient wherever the value of the cultural property before and after its restoration is not taken into full consideration. From this truth there derives the necessity to examine thoroughly all of the factors which enter into a complete evaluation of the monument in question and to do so without overlooking the economic implications of the work of restoration, as has been the case in the past. The economic factor, which often has been the mainspring and unfortunately often still is the cause of either the destruction or the abandonment of monuments, must become from now on the lever which can assure the continuing life of these monuments.

Of particular importance for the complete understanding of an historical monument is its relation to the urban situation. This is a factor which by now plays a crucial role in every activity pertaining to the protection of monuments. For this reason, no operation of restoration can avoid recognizing the necessity of having an exact understanding of the urban context.

This above all else, is the new note in our period of history. Even if not expressed universally, it is nonetheless the most valid component of all the completed work — even if, in fact, often overlooked.

The tragedy of the deformation of cultural centres brought about by the disharmonious development of building and by the absence of any solid cultural foundation for the development of building plans is a phenomenon common almost everywhere. The ruin of the natural landscape caused by the irresponsible expansion of industrial interests is also a common tragedy.

The lack of specialized personnel and the consequent urgent necessity to give special attention to the specific training of those who have the direct responsibility for the protection of historical sites is likewise one of the most urgent demands of our particular time.

The legislative implementation of the protection of cultural properties, among the most valid necessities of a civilized life, is a problem the solution of which can not be deferred.

These, stated briefly, are the problems which have filled the schedule of our congress. It behoves us to respond without delay to these grave problems which are of importance to life today and above all to the future — problems which extend into every aspect of our civilization.

This second congress of specialists in the field of conservation and protection takes place seven years after our first meeting in Paris. Concluding the task of bringing our work up-to-date, we have been able to assess the experiences of these

seven years and to evaluate those predictions which did materialize, those which were mistaken, and the new factors which have presented themselves in the meantime. We have been able to foresee those modifications in the programme of care and restoration which are suggested by the recognition that the saving of the monuments of the past does have significance in a modern industrial civilization in regard to general well-being, and that in addition to the cultural value of historical sites, another but not antagonistic value must be taken into consideration, that is, the economic value.

With regard to that second but not secondary consideration concerning the most profitable utilization of a country's cultural patrimony, the experts in tourism can teach us a great deal. It is necessary that the experts in the field of preservation and conservation evaluate in a similar manner the means to the most profitable exploitation — in relation to demanding requirements — of monuments and of properties that had been considered practically useless. In relation to this consideration an urgent appeal is directed to those who support the priority of cultural considerations in the evaluation of monuments, that is to those who are "conservators", by profession or by inclination. We enjoin them to think of these new economic stimuli as an aid rather than as an obstacle.

We must convince ourselves that the intransigence with which we have opposed ourselves to the realities of the situation has not been helpful to our cause: to consider only some aspects of a problem is not a courageous act and above all, does not solve the problem. With equal vigour, however, it is necessary to address ourselves to the economic experts, to enjoin them to confront this situation not in a narrow fashion but from a position which permits them to have a more ample perspective of the problems involved.

The results of this meeting in Venice are momentous. We need only recall the creation of the International Council of Monuments and Sites — ICOMOS — the institution which constitutes the court of highest appeal in the area of the restoration of monuments, and of the conservation of ancient historical centres, of the landscape and in general of places of artistic and historical importance. That organization must supervise the creation of specialized personnel, its recruitment and its advancement. It must oversee the use of international exchanges and in addition concern itself with the creation of local international committees that are capable of counseling international organizations (UNESCO, the Council of Europe, etc.) and the various countries which ask questions of it. As an aid to these ends, it has at its disposal a specialized publication, Monumentum.

With the creation of ICOMOS a gap lamented by every nation has been closed and a need which had been felt by every local organization concerned with conservation satisfied.

But above all, it is to be recognized that the most important positive result by far of this assembly has been the formulation of the international code for restoration: not simply a cultural episode but a text of historical importance. In fact, it constitutes an obligation which no one will be able to ignore, the spirit of which all experts will have to keep if they do not want to be considered cultural outlaws. The concerns thus codified constitute for everyone today an unassailable document the validity of which will be affirmed more and more as time passes, thereby uniting the name of Venice forever with this historic event. In fact, from now on, the Charter of Venice will be in all the world the official code in the field of the conservation of cultural properties.

And now we arrive at the point of presenting this volume of the Acts. The seven years intervening between the date of the congress and today are many. We apologize for this delay, but we must ask the understanding of our colleagues — that they understand the difficulties which slowed down the publication of a work as vast as this, on which personages of all countries and speaking different languages collaborated.

With regard to language, we must explain that in addition to Italian — the language of the country organizing the conference — French and English were adopted, insofar as they are among the working languages of UNESCO. For obvious economic reasons, it was necessary to abandon the original project of using also the other two official languages of UNESCO — Russian and Spanish.

We are confident that the time intervening between the Congress and the publication of its Acts has not diminished the value of the present volume.

In it, on the one hand, the individual contributions are in themselves the conclusions relating to their respective topics; on the other hand, the conclusions and summaries of the reporters at the various working sessions serve to indicate the status quaestionis of the studies in the individual areas, to define directions, to point out lacunae, and to suggest researches.

In the confidence that the Acts of the Congress of Venice can honorably take their place beside the precedent volumes which document the conference of Athens in 1932 and the first of our Congresses, that in Paris, in 1957, we trust that the series, with increasing worthiness, will continue in the documentation and exemplification of the scientific progress of the studies concerned with restoration and will continue in the development and qualification of the legal instruments and operating forces available to the various peoples of the world for the conservation, valorization, and rebirth of their own historical, cultural, and artistic patrimony.

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