

JOINT MEETING WITH AICA IN FINLANDIA HALL, HELSINKI : TWO SUPPLEMENTARY SESSIONS.

134. The theme of the first session was « **Cultural Identity, Art and Criticism** », chaired by **Bodil Kaalund, Denmark for IAA**, assisted by **Dan Haulica, Romania, President of AICA**.

135. M/s Kaalund welcomed the members of both Associations to this joint meeting of IAA and AICA. She expressed her thanks for having been appointed chairman of the meeting and said she hoped that this encounter, with all its speeches, discussions and debates, would give a good impulse to the future activities of both Associations. She appealed to the members of AICA for co-operation with IAA, because it would lead to the strengthening of the position of art in the world. Then M/s Kaalund submitted the Congress's **Decision N° CR.46** to the members of AICA. This was in the form of a Recommendation adopted unanimously by IAA the previous day.

A short introduction of the day's schedule followed.

136. Then M/s Kaalund introduced the first of the three speakers of the morning, **Mr Dan Haulica**. He had worked 20 years for AICA in Romania and was editor-in-chief of **Secolul 20**, a publication which comes out every month. It deals with theatre, literature, film, the visual arts and other arts in his Country.

137. Mr Haulica started his speech by wishing artists and art critics welcome to their joint meeting, which he found an excellent idea. He also thanked the host countries for bringing friends and enemies, the « friendly enemies », together. After their respective meetings it was good to have a chance of discussing problems that concerned both artists and art critics. He continued :

138. « **There is so much ugliness in the world. Ugliness means many things. One concrete aspect is ugliness in cities. We need beauty, or art, to change the face of the cities. This action ranges from city planning to every aspect of city life. The archaeological legacy has to be preserved, for artists need old art treasures as a source of inspiration and as objects for study. For creating something new and genuine, we need to know what is genuine from the past.** » Mr Haulica quoted **Alvar Aalto**, « **We must eliminate all that is artificial from Architecture** ». One of Unesco's doctrines is concerned with a respect for differences, and this attitude is also needed in all projects aimed at changing ugliness into beauty.

139. Mr Haulica said that the multiple problem of Cultural Identity had been in the limelight in our respective congresses during the past few days. In his opinion, the question was not easy to solve. It had been a slow, painful process. Even countries with one homogeneous culture were still searching for the answer. « Internationalization and globalization » have their risks. Instead of enriching they may impoverish.

140. Geographical dimensions in this respect, add colour and inspiration but also postpone effective solutions. The Nordic countries have been among the initiators in trying to approach the less-known cultures about which we should be much better informed. Unesco's purpose was to reach these less-known cultures. There is so much art in Africa and Asia that has not been allowed to flourish. Biennales are fine, but what we really should do is to go to Australia, to Latin America, to Africa to see and to explore.

141. This joint meeting of artists and art critics was a major step in the right direction. « **We meet on a friendly basis, collect ideas and initiatives. Both Associations already have wide networks to make contacts easier, but we also have a common enemy : bureaucracy ! We can learn from each other : artists can become more critical, critics more artistic. The traditional division into « artists » and « art critics » is not valid any longer. The critic's role is now more constructive, illustrating, supportive** ». It was only natural, he said, that artists and art critics have different approaches to art, but there was much more understanding, flexibility and interchange these days. There were also new prospects and projects for sharing ideas, all of which was important and most welcome. « **We should all learn to look at large entities, not at details** ».

142. Both the second and the third speakers were introduced to the audience by M/s Kaalund, who reminded the listeners of their privilege to discuss, comment or ask questions after every speech.

143. The first was **Mr Kalervo Siikala**, Director of Cultural Relations, the Ministry of Education of Finland.

In his speech, Mr Siikala concentrated on the complex relations between the centre and the periphery, the tension between them, the way they influence one another, the struggles and the co-operation in the various walks of cultural life, not least of all in the field of art. The great centres are the dictators of the world. The great centre may be a great power, an important city, a big company. They have vast resources at their disposal, large populations, the possibility to specialize, and can control the latest technology. Indeed, many people are of the opinion that the great centres use their position to deprive the peripheries of their natural resources, raw materials, population and talented individuals, leaving them impoverished and suppressed.

144. This is the situation to-day in many parts of the world. If we look into the past we see many of the great centres as the seats of Western culture, Paris, Rome, Athens, etc. Art flourished where there was money and power. Competition between the centres improved the conditions in which art was created. The fates of the great centres of the past were intertwined with world history : some centres declined, new ones arose and, with them, new trends in art.

145. In our century the world of art had been controlled by Paris, London and New York. Since World War II, Paris and London had lost a good deal of their influence. New York seems to be the art centre of the world. Certain parts of Manhattan are packed with artists' colonies and art galleries. « **The Mecca of Modern Art** » or « **A breakthrough in New York makes an artist an international artist** » are things we can read in papers. The dominance of New York has been harshly criticized and attacked, of course. Many people would like to see the position of Paris restored.

146. The conception of periphery has lately lost some of its negative connotation. On the contrary, people — many artists among them — are moving away from the big centres.

147. Peripheries have also been acknowledged as important art centres, because the art, for example, of small ethnic minority groups has been preserved in them. In Finland and other Nordic countries, the aim is a cultural policy that would do justice to all artists in the centres as well as in the peripheries. Both parties concerned have the right to participate in national and international dialogue and exchange.

148. When Mr Siikala had spoken, M/s Kaalund called upon **Professor Solomon Irein Wangboje**, of Nigeria, to take the floor. Professor Wangboje said he felt particularly gratified to be invited to speak on the important theme « **Cultural Identity, Art and Criticism** ». Though he approved of international conferences, on the whole, he also had some criticism to offer, because so often at these meetings so much that is impressive, and even pious, is said, and so little is done afterwards. Most probably no conference can solve the problems it is discussing, but it is to be hoped that it can start people thinking, and at its best acting, towards solutions.

149. Professor Wangboje said that Cultural Identity is always a sensitive issue, but particularly sensitive among nations whose recent colonial experience has tended to dehumanise them, and where the first to suffer are minorities and culturally disadvantaged groups. « **Minority groups** » can of course also be majority groups, culturally and socially subdued by a ruling minority; the case of the blacks in South Africa is an example. The blacks have no say in national affairs, no way to assert their cultural identity in a meaningful way. In many African countries, political independence has not automatically resulted in economic or cultural independence. The political and economic grip of the former colonial masters is still firm.

150. This is the confusing setting for many a contemporary African artist, often called « **a man (or woman) sitting between two stools** ». One is made up of the traditional norms, the other of contemporary realities. If he chooses the former, returns to the past to find his cultural identity, his motives may often be quite sincere; but on the other hand, he can also do so to please his « patron », the tourist, who will buy anything with the « primitive » look. That is what African art is to the average buyer. **Contemporary African art is not original, but imported European art**. Western critics generally consider that a European artist draws inspiration from African art even when direct copying is evident (e.g. Picasso's Cubist period); but the African artist, « inspired » by European art is said to « copy » it.