

SOCIÉTÉ EUROPÉENNE DE CULTURE

I-30133 Venice, Giudecca 54 P (Calle Michelangelo, Villa Hériot) - Tél. 041/5230210 - Fax 041/5231033
e-mail: info@societaeuropeacultura.it - www.societaeuropeacultura.it

XXVIIth Ordinary General Assembly

The Crises of the Present and the Ethical Benchmark. An Appeal for Dialogue.

Pescia (Pistoia), from 17 to 20 May 2007

To the members of the European Society of Culture

We are pleased to call the members of the European Society of Culture to its next biennial plenary session, which falls in 2007. The meeting will be held in Tuscany – a new departure for the Society – and in the month of May – also usual in the Society's traditions. The venue will be Pescia, in the Province of Pistoia, near Lucca and Montecatini, where the National Carlo Collodi Foundation will provide organizational assistance. The date: from 17 May (Ascension day) to 20 May 2007. We see in this a good omen for the resumption of our task with renewed vigour, a task which is always the same but ever new.

This is a new stage in the Society's journey through the midst of unfolding contemporary history, a journey which appears as a testimony to the commitment which it has theorized with the term politics of culture. This new stage will serve to take stock of the situation and redirect our work in response to current challenges. This is something that we have never failed to do, to the extent that, when we return to issues addressed over the years, recollections of the corresponding general situations come to mind at the same time.

What are the motivations underlying the choice of the theme which we have formulated and now propose to you?

In our shrinking world, the hotbeds of crisis are legion and the globalization of communications means they can no longer be ignored. Fundamental givens are changing everywhere, realities are being transformed, whilst an awareness of these and the capacity to respond to them requires a difficult and conflictual maturation process and, doubtless more important still, courageous acts of invention. Referring merely to the limited sphere of our institution, numerous experiences and reflections serve to illustrate this state of affairs: crises in the domains of religion, politics, law, science, education and the arts, a quality crisis ... We are counting upon the contribution of our entire membership, from the Americas to Eurasia, without for this reason neglecting to continue our most recent work on the gap between the European Union and the union of Europeans. With the latter, we believe we can offer a contribution to the EU programme for 2008, which aims to encourage the emergence of European citizenship through dialogue between different forms of cultural expression.

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We have no doubt that the in-depth reflection conducted by the SEC on authentic dialogue, the type of dialogue which succeeds in defusing head-on clashes, together with its long experience, will represent a genuine contribution to this programme.

“The crises of the present”. When faced with manifestations of crisis which are so numerous and diverse it was natural to use the plural.

In a different vein, it is also natural that we should refer to the thought of our founder, on the thirtieth anniversary of his death (1976). His final works were devoted to the crisis, in the singular, and what in his opinion was needed to overcome it. He saw this crisis as lying in the bipolarity itself of the world, where everything was organized around two rival blocks, dominated by the arms race and subjecting the world to a “balance of terror”; an all-encompassing crisis since, faced with the threat of universal nuclear destruction, in front of which, all other problems, described as major, became secondary.

Today the geopolitical situation is completely different. Yet if we move from the diagnosis to the cure proposed at the time, we find in Umberto Campagnolo’s eloquent testament nourishment for the present. This is the appeal to ethics. An ethics which is far from moralistic, but which is seen as the only universal force capable of countering global crisis. His vision of mankind as the cause of the critical situation, which equally entails the conviction that mankind itself will succeed in overcoming it – as long as this is «mankind without restrictive attributes» – can certainly serve as an inspiration for our current work.

It is superfluous to say that the authority and the power of projection of our reflections and our engagement, once they have again been brought up to date, will be enhanced by your participation in the forthcoming Tuscan meeting.

We invite you to this meeting assuring you of our dedication to the cause, our hope for the future and our friendship,

Venice, late November 2006

The Secretary General:	The First Vice President:	The President
M. Campagnolo-Bouvier	Arrigo Levi	Vincenzo Cappelletti