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ON FINANCING OF CULTURE

Permit me to greet this gathering which is being organized, under the auspices of UNESCO, by the Yugoslav National Commission for UNESCO and the Centre for the Study of Cultural Development in Belgrade. On behalf of the Yugoslav Commission for UNESCO, I should like to wish all the participants success in their consideration of one of the most concrete aspects of cultural policy — the financing of culture. I am sure that this three-day discussion will not only serve towards a useful exchange of experience in matters of common interest to UNESCO's member-countries, but also enrich our knowledge and work to promote cultural policy in the spirit of the principles on constructive international cultural cooperation and the democratization of culture, contained in UNESCO's declarations and other documents.

As you well know, meetings of this kind cannot aspire towards final theoretical or practical conclusions. The existence of such a variety of experience, conditions and possibilities for cultural development in different countries make such ambitions unrealistic. The aims of this gathering, as conceived and suggested by the organizers in the enclosed programme, are far more modest and realistic. On the one hand, this meeting should open a broad exchange of views and practical experience in the sphere of financing culture and, if possible, it should establish elements of common interest. On the other hand, it should offer concrete proposals to UNESCO on the methodology, aims and forms of participation by interested countries in elaborating a study on the financing of culture, as provided by point 3252 in UNESCO's two-year programme.

Some hold reservations both with respect to the purpose of such gatherings and with respect to the appropriateness of the future study on the financing of culture. In their opinion, gatherings of this kind, attended by countries with such different conditions and material possibilities

for cultural development, are doomed, before they even begin, to declarative conclusions which are so general that they can be neither falacious nor unacceptable. At the same time, however, they have such little theoretical and operational importance that their relevance is minimum or non-existent.

In elaborating their sceptical views, they ask how one can compare, in this context, the developed countries on the one hand, with their broad network of cultural and art institutions and absolute literacy, with their developed and qualitatively quite different cultural needs, subtle problems of creativity and esthetic education, specific and pronouncedly topical problems of dovetailing modern technological development with humanistic development, and the situation in the under-developed countries on the other, with their topical cultural problems, their kaleidoscope of dialects and still unformed common language which is a restrictive factor in cultural communication among the people, with their literacy problems, the absence or insufficient development of networks of fundamental cultural institutions, tribal fragmentation in cultural tradition, problems of satisfying their elementary cultural needs, etc. According to this view, without a realistic approach to and respect for differences, such an undertaking is more a reflection of fulfilling the obligations laid down in the UNESCO programme than it is a contribution to considering the real and relevant problems of given regions.

In this connection, the question arises as to what we mean by culture, not only in the theoretically more acceptable formulation (American authors A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn enumerated no less than 257 definitions in their 1967 Harvard University Press book „A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions“), but also in a practical sense. According to these critics, it is difficult to define the actual object of the study, and hence, its frameworks of content; at meetings such as this, it is difficult to determine a basis for discussion, for, as it is known, some countries interpret culture in the narrow sense, i.e. art institutions and various forms of creative cultural manifestation, traditional cultural institutions such as the theatre, museums, film, libraries, etc., while others include in their definition the schooling system, recreation, even sport, as well as elementary culture, raising literacy and various practical courses in answer to the real needs of the environment.

Then there are also great differences which directly reflect the economic position of the people in what is known as cultural consumption,

such as the buying power of people in the developed countries which permits the satisfaction of a part of their cultural needs, and the covering of a major part of the costs in culture through markets offering cultural goods and services, as compared to the almost minimum purchasing power of the people in under-developed countries, which decreases or completely excludes cultural consumption as a way of self-financing cultural activities. Differences in the development of consumption and the general economic base are directly reflected on the development of culture and its prospects, and hence, these differences are a trait and feature of the modern-day world.

We cannot ignore these objections, for they are substantiated by convincing arguments. What should be verified, however, is the absolute meaning of the differences on which these critics insist. Is there not a tendency, one might ask, of stressing differences at the expense of common elements which, as I shall attempt to illustrate, do exist. Irrespective of the development level of given countries, culture, as a deeper and humane form of expressing one's individuality and as a possibility of inter-personal communication and understanding, is assuming an ever-growing importance in both national and universal frameworks, as is, consequently, practical cultural policy. We could agree with Roland Barthes when he says, „Everything is culture, from clothing to books, from food to pictures, and culture is everywhere from one end of the social scale to the other". While any attempt to define culture, even in metaphorical literary form, poses a risk, we should like to quote one such attempt by Luigi Nono, the Italian composer, for whom „culture is simply the inner quality of life". We realize that this quality is not always and necessarily an expression of the economic and technical development of a country, but rather a far more complex matter depending on many socio-economic, psychological, historical and other factors.

If cultures differ in their form of manifestation, in their significance in national life, their essence and relevance are still more or less common to all countries, regardless of their development level, as are the global aims of cultural development. This is substantiated by UNESCO's declarations which treat them in universally accepted formulations. There is a far greater difference, depending on the conditions, in the methods and practise used in attaining global cultural goals than in the goals themselves.

Yet, even with respect to these methods, common elements can be found such as the plan-

ning and programming of cultural development by governments and corresponding organs of state administration, the determining of priorities within the available alternatives, methods of studying and following cultural development and cultural needs, the protection of cultural heritage and problems entailed in achieving a continuity between cultural tradition and contemporary cultural expression, the living past and the actual present. The experience of the developed countries in this sphere is highly useful to the developing countries, but this can work both ways. The developed countries, for example, may be interested in the attempts of the developing countries not to repeat, in the process of industrialization and urbanization, the mistakes of some highly advanced countries where technological progress was not necessarily accompanied by corresponding cultural progress, but rather, in certain cases, worked to destroy the long-nurtured and cultivated „inner quality of life”, as L. Nono would say. Let me further mention the tendency in some highly advanced countries to revive cultural amateurism and adopt certain forms of cultural individual activity from countries with a preserved traditional culture, forms such as folklore, folk creativity, folk music, ancient arts and crafts which industrialization destroyed and which are now experiencing a renaissance.

All this may not be directly relevant to the theme of our meeting, but I should like to stress that the financing of cultural activities is the fundamental assumption and crucial factor of any national cultural policy focussing on altering and promoting the existing state of affairs, focussing, then, on the future. The financing of culture, just as cultural policy itself, is incorporated in the social life of a country. One can practically say the same thing for non-national frameworks — various forms of international cooperation which reveal a tendency towards constant expansion and which reflect an internationalist spirit and responsibility for the development of not only their own environments but mankind in general. The developed can help the developing countries both economically and culturally in fostering education and science, etc. Such aid, however, must respect the right of the recipients to voice their own cultural needs. Forms of assistance must not be imposed on them from outside according to the theory that they should be grateful for anything they receive, or „never look a gift-horse in the mouth”.

These questions are perhaps even more sensitive in culture than they are in economics or elsewhere, for assistance can sometimes produce effects entirely contrary to what was desired.

This usually occurs when it is based on an insufficient knowledge of the cultural situation, experience and authentic cultural needs, on a lack of respect for the right of the recipient country independently to interpret its development goals. In certain extreme cases, such assistance endeavours through cultural forms to instill political influence and para-cultural motives, making the recipients of this assistance feel „Timeo Danaos et dona ferrentes”. Yet the field of culture offers such exceptionally broad scope for learning about and understanding other national cultures, for exchanging all sorts of theoretical and practical experience, and for a true openness towards the cultural influence of all environments. As is known, cultural isolation is bound to lead to negative results. Sometimes, it is guided by an effort to achieve spiritual and political control and to manipulate and direct the consciousness of the people, but also by reasons of defending itself from influences which do not take into account and sometimes even attempt to negate the historical, ideological and socio-cultural characteristics of given countries. My point is that greater and deeper mutual awareness, which includes an awareness of cultural conditions, is a necessity of the modern-day world. This implies both a knowledge of the spiritual culture of a country and its creative achievements and characteristics, and of such practical aspects as cultural policy and its experience, the organization of cultural life and forms of financing culture.

Yet another example directly related to our theme is the method of accumulating funds for culture and deciding on their apportionment. This is an exceptionally important aspect of cultural policy and of the financing of culture. How are decisions passed, who passes them or influences their passing and with how much social and democratic responsibility, how and to what extent does the financing of culture reflect the true cultural needs of the people? We know that in the classical kind of state organization and distribution of social power and influence, the administrative top can, and sometimes does, give expression more to its own preferences in determining priorities in the financing of cultural activities than it does to objective needs, for example, it can give preference to ballet and opera over other activities, or the arts over literature, etc. The influence of cultural administration on the distribution of budgetary funds for culture is still very strong even in the most advanced countries, and this is still far from being an ideal and democratic model of decision-making which reflects the actual cultural needs of the environment.

Some of the developing countries are seeking new and more democratic forms of decision-making and experience in this field can also be of interest to the developed countries. On the other hand, in the developed countries themselves there are parallel different forms of accumulating resources for culture, which means different forms of decision-making on their distribution. Budgetary means are collected fiscally and then flow into central funds and are decided on in a centralistic manner, i. e. according to the classical budget technique which essentially has not changed for decades. The central administration's influence on the distribution of these means into individual spheres of social life, including culture, continues to predominate. At the same time, the amassment and distribution of funds in local communities is achieved through forms which give more direct expression to the desires and needs of the people. The socialization of cultural policy and its most concrete form, the financing of culture, evolves more rapidly in local communities than it does in decision-making on central funds for culture. Cultural decentralization, hence, has become equally relevant for the developed and the developing countries and it does and must also imply the decentralization of power and influence in deciding on the financing of cultural activities.

We will discuss, at this gathering, communities of culture, a self-management institution in Yugoslavia whose experience will be presented critically. In culture as in other spheres of social life, through these communities the socialist and democratic principle of effecting the direct influence of the people on the handling of public matters is carried out. With the development of these new forms of decision-making, which also include deciding on the financing of cultural activities, the social consciousness and responsibility of the people is reinforced. Equally, however, many qualitatively new questions and dilemmas arise which I think will be of interest to you. There is the question of decentralization in culture, which includes decision-making on the use of not only local but also central funds, and that at all levels, from the federation, republics and provinces to the commune. We cannot offer ready answers, nor do we want to propagate our own experience, for we are in the process of highly dynamic changes entailing many controversies, but we can say that solutions are being sought to open up the whole of social policy to the influence of society, which means, among other things, the direct influence of society on conceiving and pursuing cultural policy.

The modern world is becoming increasingly interconnected and there is an ever-expanding

circle of questions of common interest. Culture, which more than other spheres of social life works to link up people and foster a spirit of solidarity and a feeling of belonging to the world community, directly reflects common interests, even in so specific a field as cultural policy and the financing of culture. Divisions into separate groups, justified by practical and even persuasive reasons and motives, do not work to strengthen cooperation and a feeling of responsibility for the fate of the world and of mankind, which is the aim of culture in all countries and environments. If negation of the existence of true and deep-rooted differences in development levels and future prospects is contrary to reality and in conflict with it, then it is equally contrary to reality to negate the existence of many common elements. I hope that this gathering will help to clarify this question and suggest conclusions which will respect both these contradictory elements in their dialectical unity.

Although this will be discussed separately in point six of our agenda, I should like to point out a possibility which seems to me realistic and methodologically valid, and that is that the future study on the financing of culture be conceived in a complementary form, in which individual member-countries can take part and, on the basis of the similarity between current problems, opt for those aspects in the financing of culture which are most relevant to their own conditions. If this is accepted as valid, then our task would be to formulate the basic questions in this field and to permit the member-countries to decide, on the basis of their own evaluation of these questions' pertinency for their specific conditions, how and in what way they will contribute to this study.

In conclusion, I should like to say how happy I am that UNESCO has entrusted the organization of this gathering to my country. I am sure that our work here will mark a useful contribution to an exchange of experience in this field.