

The Cultural Committee

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During the preparations for the Congress of Europe, several eminent intellectual figures were sounded out for the post of Chairman of the Cultural Committee. These included the Italian Liberal philosopher, Benedetto Croce, and his compatriot, the writer and Social Democrat MP, Ignazio Silone. However, the Spanish essayist and former Ambassador, Salvador de Madariaga y Rojo, Professor of Literature at Oxford University and President of the Liberal International, was selected. As Chairman, he worked alongside the French federalist, Alexandre Marc, and the Swiss writer, Denis de Rougemont, who assumed the role of general rapporteur.

The first task of the Cultural Committee was to draft the Preamble to the Hague Congress. This text, which was to be read during the first plenary session, was of particular importance, for its purpose was to define the spirit that would inform all the work carried out at the Congress. In Rougemont's view, the Preamble had to serve as 'a sort of European charter'. He believed that the success of the Congress and its usefulness hinged on the coherence of the decisions taken by the three Committees. For this reason, the participants needed to speak the same language and share the same democratic ideal. The second objective of the Cultural Committee was to draft a report on the cultural aspects of European unity and on the institutions that needed to be established with a view to promoting such unity. Lastly, the Committee was responsible for drawing up a draft Cultural Resolution that would be submitted to the participants at the Congress.

The Cultural Committee, which was set up later than the Political and Economic and Social Committees, drew up its report on the basis of the criteria laid down by Rougemont with the assistance of the British MP, Kenneth Lindsay, the Belgian-Polish Professor, Stefan Glaser, and the French philosophers, Robert Aron and Paul Gaultier. However, the preparations were fraught with tensions. Personal conflicts compounded the ideological differences existing between committee members. The unionists, most of whom were attending as members of the United Europe Movement and the Independent League for European Cooperation (ILEC), were frequently opposed to the proponents of a federalist system (similar to that advocated by the Union of European Federalists (UEF) and the French Council for a United Europe). Rougemont was indignant at the attitude of the leaders of the United Europe Movement who, without informing him, directly appointed British delegates to the Cultural Committee. Meanwhile, Duncan Sandys, who was President of the International Committee of the Movements for European Unity (ICMEU) in London, sowed the seeds of confusion in Swiss federalist circles by visiting Professor Emil Brunner, theologian, and Walter Spoerri, specialist in Greek and Roman Antiquity, in Zurich to ask them to become members of the Cultural Committee in The Hague. Rougemont, who was fully aware that the Political and Economic and Social Committees consisted mainly of unionist activists, was an ardent supporter of federalist ideals. He also belonged to those who rejected a united Europe that was geared only towards the development of economic freedoms, believing, instead, that culture and human rights should form the basis of any political, social or economic entity in Europe.

Without delay, Denis de Rougemont forwarded a preliminary report to all the eminent figures who had agreed to sit on the Cultural Committee. A pragmatist, he placed particular emphasis on the fact that the exchange of views should not lead to 'yet another manifesto'. The objective was rather to persuade Europe's intellectual elite to come out in favour of European union. In Rougemont's view, it was necessary to demonstrate the reality of a Europe founded on a common culture and on 'a concept of mankind that is different from the Soviet or American or Asian concept'. He therefore deeply deplored the detrimental effect of nationalism and totalitarianism on European values and on the diversity of the peoples of the Old Continent. The debates that ensued focused primarily on the identity, unity and specific characteristics of Europe.

In The Hague, some 100 delegates met as the Cultural Committee. The members of its Bureau included, in addition to Salvador de Madariaga, Denis de Rougemont and Alexandre Marc, the Independent British MP, Kenneth Lindsay, C. Rodd and Raymond Silva. Its debates turned out to be less heated than those held by the two other Committees. After discussing at length the preamble and the European concept of mankind, the participants considered the need to establish a European University and a sort of European UNESCO. However, for lack of time, they could only touch on the preliminary report by Alexandre Marc on the establishment of a Supreme Court and the protection of human rights.

Following statements made by the British writer, Charles Morgan, Stefan Glaser, Professor at the University of Liège and member of the *Nouvelles Équipes Internationales* (New International Teams — NEI), Étienne Gilson, member of the Académie Française, Paul Bret, Managing Director of the Agence France-Presse (AFP) news agency, Claire Saunier, President of the French National Education Commission, and several church representatives, the text of a Cultural Resolution was drawn up by the Drafting Committee and adopted unanimously by the Congress participants at a special plenary session held on Sunday 9 May.

In its Resolution, the Cultural Committee recognised that true European unity, ‘even in the midst of our national, ideological and religious differences, is to be found in the common heritage of Christian and other spiritual and cultural values and our common loyalty to the fundamental rights of man, especially freedom of thought and expression.’ Efforts to unite ‘must be sustained and inspired by an awakening of the conscience of Europe’. The Committee therefore called for the establishment of a European Cultural Centre that would be independent of all governmental supervision. It also recommended the establishment of a European Institute for Childhood and Youth Questions to be responsible, in particular, for encouraging exchanges between young people in Europe. Finally, affirming that the defence of human rights is fundamental to efforts for a united Europe, the Cultural Committee considered that a Supreme Court should be established that would be responsible for assuring legal compliance with a Charter of Human Rights.