

Europe's New Destiny

When we report current events, they should be worth reporting. Assuredly, the International Conference on Europe's New Destiny, which took place at U.A.L. on 18-19 October 2001, exceeded our expectations as host organization.

Firstly, in spite of the events of September 11th, most of the speakers agreed that to discuss "What Kind of Europe do we wish to live in?" and "Within Which Type of Institutional Framework?" is even more relevant than before and, probably, something that needs deciding with urgency,

Secondly, everyone came prepared to debate all aspects of the subject, even though they were each to deliver a communication on an aspect the European Debate that is their own speciality.

Consequently, each morning or afternoon session of the two day conference was followed by a lively 1,5 hour debate, to the considerable satisfaction of all those involved. The language of the conference was English, the only one shared by all the speakers and observer participants.

The topics included in the official programme were wide-ranging. The first was "The Strategic Implications of Enhanced Cooperation" as seen by the President of the Polish Institute of International Affairs, Dr. Ryszard Stemplowski. A change of pace was provided by Dr. Karel Zeman from Prague, who reviewed the Czech view of their candidacy to join the EU. Then, to complete the first morning's set of talks, Professor Tibor Palánkai, former Rector of the Budapest University of Economic Sciences (BKE) and presently Director of its Centre for European Studies, discussed "Some Strategic Questions of Eastern Enlargement". After a break for coffee, the first lively debate stirred the participants to a genuine feeling of anticipation for what was yet to come.

The speakers for the first afternoon were Professor Joseph Bigio (UAL), Professor Manfred Knapp from the Universität der Bundeswehr Hamburg and, finally, the Head of the EU Commission Representation to the U.K., Dr. Geoffrey Martin, who topped off the set talks with one about “The Changing Kaleidoscope of Europe”. Using his own individual approach to the subject, he confirmed to us that «the (reform) process now underway is as radical if not more so than the foundation of the Economic Community half a century ago.».

The succeeding debate was entered into with just as much enthusiasm as the one in the morning, as you will recognize if you happen to read the book of the proceedings (Actas) that the EU Commission and UAL expect to have published in the near future. And, in the evening at the formal dinner, Eng. Ricardo Charters de Azevedo, Head of the EU Commission Representation to Portugal, further regaled the gathering with a speech inciting us to continue what we had started. The debate needs to be relayed at grass roots levels, he told us, reminding us also that it could only be carried on, if we first found out what the audiences would be interested to discuss.

We won't tell you much more about the second day other than to say that the momentum was maintained and that the keynote speech of the day was given by Professor Horst Hanusch, Secretary-General of the International J.A.Schumpeter Society. Talking on “The Dynamics of European Integration, he gave a fascinating insight on how applicable Schumpeterean Economic Theory is in the context of an enlarged European Union aiming for economic development with social cohesion. He was followed by Professor Ryszard Domanski, Rector of the Higher School of Commerce and International Finance (WSHiFM), Professor Francisco Corrêa Guedes, Professor of International Economics (UAL) and Professor José Amado da Silva, Director of the Department of Economics (UAL).

In the afternoon, Ambassador Rolands Lappuke (Latvia) gave us a revealing brief on “A small nation and a Big Union”, followed by Professor Ewa Latoszek, Dean of MBA studies and specialist in enlargement negotiation studies and a

specialist at WSHiFM, who talked about Social attitudes in Poland towards Integration in the European Union.

The final debate, chaired by Professor Tibor Palánkai, was again lively and intrigued us all with the conclusion that attitudes were pretty much the same at the various levels of society, whichever European nation one was talking about.

At an informal, convivial dinner, accompanied by two Fado singers, the conversation showed how readily Europeans from seven countries can get along together. And this was confirmed the following day, when, after a guided tour of the Gulbenkian Museum, the group were taken by coach to the castle at Tomar for a guided visit to the Convento de Cristo. From the castle we walked down (in the rain) to tour the town, on our way to the hotel where we were staying overnight. The following morning, not too early, we piled into transport to Fatima to be able to attend mass and, by chance, were witnesses to a 100,000 strong pilgrimage on the occasion of International Mission Sunday. Thus, the speakers were able to return to their homes in Poland (5), Germany (2) Hungary, the Czech Republic and Britain, the Latvian Embassy in Lisboa and the Lisboa-Cascais area (5). We at UAL are particularly happy they were able to come here and experience, as one of them put it, some wonderful days in friendship.