



Prof. V.M. Polevoi

21

Dear Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

My report will be brief and of an essentially informative nature.

Favourable conditions for the growth of professional artistic activity, which form the basic theme of our congress, are closely related to the social and aesthetic climate in which the artist pursues his calling. The outcome of this relationship and its ultimate effectiveness are dependent upon one aspect or another of the cultural awareness of society.

By extension, this becomes a question of the cultural level and inclination of a particular socio-historical type, of the amount and kind of interest shown in art by society as a whole, and of its awareness of the role art plays in its day-to-day life. The creation of the necessary material and organisational basis for the growth of artistic activity largely depends upon these ideological considerations.

Within a socialist framework, state and public support for the arts solves the practical problems of encouraging artistic activity as well as of creating an intellectual and social climate in which art can flourish and successfully fulfil its humanitarian function. Allow me briefly to run through the most important resolutions of the soviet state and the communist party to have been implemented in the 1970s. Quite apart from their substance, the very fact that such resolutions are passed at all reflects the importance which socialist society attaches to the promotion of art, the raising of the level of popular cultural awareness, and the formation of an aesthetically well-founded personality.

The resolutions I refer to are as follows:

- 1971: Resolution on the "General plan for Moscow", in which considerable space was devoted to the question of artistic quality in architecture, and to the synthesis of architecture and the plastic arts in the urban complex.
- 1972: Resolution on "Literary and artistic criticism," which underlined the social implications of criticism, its role in the promotion of art and of cultural awareness in society, and in the strengthening of bonds between the arts and the people at large.
- 1974: Resolution on "Popular arts and crafts" encouraging the promotion of greater public recognition for the work of local



craftsmen in the constituent republics of the USSR and the creation of conditions in which their skills could flourish.

- 1976: Resolution on "Working with young artists", in which considerable space is devoted to the provision of the best possible conditions for young artists in the period following the completion of their studies, when they are just embarking upon careers as artists and establishing their individual artistic identities.

- In 1976 a law was passed on "The preservation and utilization of historical and cultural monuments." This was by no means the first piece of legislation concerned with art treasures in the history of the USSR, the first such laws having been enacted immediately after the Great Revolution of October 1917, but the 1976 act established a uniquely integrated system of provisions for the protection, restoration, utilisation and public promotion of art treasures. It also included provisions for the encouragement of art collectors and for state support in the maintenance of private collections, as well as in identifying and restoring works of art and bringing them to the attention of the public.

In 1977 a new Constitution was adopted in the USSR, in which artistic matters occupy an important place. The first section of the constitution includes an article to the effect that "the state assumes responsibility for the preservation, expansion and utilisation of a wide range of cultural treasures for the moral and aesthetic edification of the Soviet people, with a view to raising their cultural level. The USSR offers full encouragement to the development of professional and popular art."

Among the basic rights, liberties and duties of the Soviet citizen, the second section of the constitution assures him the fundamental right to increase his cultural awareness through guaranteed access to national and worldwide cultural treasures in the State and public collections, through closer cultural relations with foreign countries, and through a variety of other provisions. Within the framework of the didactic aims of communism, the freedom of Soviet citizens to perform creative work in the artistic and scientific fields is guaranteed, and it is laid down that care for the protection of historical and other cultural treasures is the responsibility of every Soviet citizen.

This second section of the constitution bears the title "The State and the Individual", and the substance and aims of the state and public support for the arts listed above are in line with this heading: in the final analysis they are directed towards the

improvement of man's cultural awareness and the development of the artist's creative identity. The Resolution on "Provisions for the promotion of amateur artistic activity" pursues the same goals, proposing measures to stimulate people to engage in artistic activities in their free time, and to discover and develop their artistic and creative talents.

This, then, is the system of state and public support being consciously developed to encourage artistic activity and to further a social climate of aesthetic awareness. These measures are in accordance with the process of consolidation which has been taking place over the last few years in the role of art and literature in the spiritual life of the Soviet peoples. They reflect the importance of cultural awareness as an essential element in the spiritual development of a well-balanced personality.