



CHARTER OF MEXICO IN DEFENSE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

Translation by Valerie Magar

The ongoing global process presents two mutually opposed general trends, the comprehension of which is of utmost importance for the defense of human values.

In first place, there is a homogenizing trend that threatens to standardize the ways of being, doing and feeling of all the peoples of the Earth, accompanied by the resulting loss of the distinctive characteristics that distinguish them and allow them to express themselves through their own creativity.

Secondly, there is a diversifying trend that is only beginning to manifest itself through the growing resistance of the oppressed peoples to their cultural subjugation.

Faced with these conflicting forces, we should note that human cultural heritage encompasses both the creations inherited from the past, which must be identified, defended and preserved, and the protection of the living heritage of traditional techniques, artistic skills and aesthetic sensibilities, of beliefs and manners of understanding through which the current peoples express themselves.

On the cultural level, there exists a terrifying threat that we may only give our grandchildren museum warehouses filled with the creations of our grandparents. In other words, that through the direct destructive action and by inaction in the defense of the necessary requirements for the exercise of creativity, we deprive our successors of the inheritance of what is most noble in humankind: the liberty to freely remake themselves and the ability to express themselves in multiple ways.

This threat is not a chimera, since it is materialized both by the action of various modern means of communication of global scope that erode the local creative energies of all peoples, as well as by the exploitation of their work and the commercialization of tourism, in addition to other forms of aggression that overwhelm and corrupt the most creative human communities.

Our hope that human creativity is saved resides only in the aforementioned resistances that begin to emerge in the dominated peoples. However, these hopes can only flourish if the nations finally admit that the interest of their peoples is not in the homogenization, but in accepting the plurality of cultures within the context of the nation.

Considering that various organizations, national and international, have been pronouncing in favor of safeguarding cultural heritage with appropriate awareness of the danger it is facing, we feel the need to expand upon and enrich these statements, incorporating under

this safeguard all the products of human creativity. We identify the cultural heritage of a country in the set of artistic, craft and technical products; of linguistic and musical literary expressions; of the traditions and customs of all peoples and ethnic groups, of the past and present, and we assert the need and the urgency to apply a social and cultural policy that tends to recognize and safeguard such heritage in all its aspects.

Therefore it is vital to recognize that for an autonomous national development it is indispensable:

First, to defend the conditions of creativity of each differentiated human community.

Second, to place at the service of this required plurality all the resources offered by modern mass communication technology, instead of allowing it to continue acting as a factor contributing to the loss of cultural identity.

Third, to understand that it is essential to include in all national and regional development programs an active concern for the defense of cultural heritage, represented both by the creations inherited from the past, and by the legacy of talents and creative capacities in living populations.

Fourth, to assure that the countries of multiethnic composition be proudly recognized as such and be structured in such a way that oppression cannot be exercised over the peoples that integrate them.

Fifth, to ensure for all ethnic communities the full right to use and cultivate their own language, as well as to implement it so that they are able to write and express themselves with it.

Sixth, to guarantee that communities have the means and liberty to conserve and develop their cultural heritage, and be able to defend it against the distorting pressures of the commercialization of tourism and other forms of aggression.

Seventh, recognize that the achievements of peoples are intimately linked to these perceptions and to specific relationships with nature. Consequently, this also integrates the cultural heritage of mankind, and it is essential that development policies do not limit or destroy the possibility of these forms of rational uses of the environment.

In order to achieve a more adequate and complete defense of the cultural heritage and as a guarantee of its survival and vitality, the awareness of the communities themselves of the value of their cultural tradition is of fundamental importance. This can only be obtained through a progressive and always deeper knowledge of the character and constitutive elements of the heritage itself, through continuous research that commits the participation of the local population. It is also essential that this documentation and its results be returned to the community as an instrument to defend the authenticity and protection of their heritage.

Mexico, August 12, 1976