



PAXOS MUNICIPALITY



Cultural Village
of Europe
2004

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News Letter

No6



During the first week of November we welcomed the Mayors delegations of every village taking part in the Cultural Villages of Europe Organization for one more time.

Saturday, 6th of November:

The Town Hall Meeting Room filled with our guests, who felt very much at ease with the surroundings. Nectarios, our bishop, other representatives of the Church, Mr George Dimas, a member of the District Council, each gave a small speech saluting the closing ceremony of the "Paxos, Cultural Village of Europe for 2004" festivities and events.

The Paxos Mayor's speech brought back to us lovely memories



of everything we experienced during the past spring and summer. Albums of photographs full of emotions and enthusiasm were offered to our honored guests to help keep their memories alive for a long time. Gifts of scented honey, local

green soap and origano were also offered to our friends along with all our sincere love. Finally there came the time of passing the flag of the Cultural Villages of Europe Organization on to the representative of Killingi Nomme, Mr Kalle Kiipus. The hall

was filled with mixed emotions; satisfaction, because Paxos had made it, sadness because another circle had ended, joy, because a new circle was starting. The best of luck to Killingi Nomme, Good Luck Estonia!!!

Paxos Mayor, Mr Spyros Bogdanos in his opening speech characterized Paxos culture as the "Culture of Stone", since stone was the only material found in abundance in an otherwise barren and isolated island. Stone was used by the Paxiots through the ages in every aspect of their everyday life and through its use they managed not only to survive but also to create the cultural treasures that compose our cultural identity today. In his description of the community's achievements in collaboration with the Paxos Cultural Society he talked about the preservation of Byzantine churches, medieval water cisterns, ancient trails, dry stone walls, of the Venetian Castle, of 19th century buildings. A new school has been built, a Museum and an art gallery are functioning. Various cultural events are being organized every year. Paxos has a beautiful natural environment, ideal climate conditions, modern living facilities, hospitable and kind people, an interesting local gastronomy, sites and activities that can potentially attract any kind of tourism and especially the cultural one. If the factor of constant improvement of traveling means is added to all the above, along with a larger interest on behalf of the locals towards the deepest knowledge and appreciation of their homeland, then our island's tourist season will increase itself, our local economy will be greatly enforced and larger numbers of young people will be encouraged to return to or remain in Paxos.

Pergine Valdarno was unable to send a representative to our conference. However a letter from their new Mayor, Mrs Paola Prizzon was read to the participants, where she stated her opinion that desire for dialogue, respect to diversity, the will to reevaluate the historic, rural and cultural inheritance of small villages will be important factors for their development. She also expressed her belief that the Cultural Villages Organisation has been activated right when Europe has made a quality step towards unity and integration between European people. Then the Italian paper about the influence of Public Administration in the Evolution of Cultural Tourism was read to the audience. Having accepted the fact that administration in both national and local levels define the management strategies of the Tourism product, Pergine using its moderate financial sources and national legislation manages to profit on its geographical position next to larger cities, rich in history and culture and on its rural structures. Next to its constant search for funding - even in the private sector and especially among the local business community - Pergine through organizing cultural events, based on local customs in its historical center buildings tries to market local products, to involve local population as much as possible, to attract Italian and Foreign Tourists in order to give power to the local economy and enable itself to reinvest the money gained back into the improvement of the local tourist industry.

The delegation members of **Tommerup** described the cultural status in their village. Some of the best Danish popular musicians live and work in Tommerup along with many ceramic artists, weavers, visual artists etc. In 2004 the local ceramic workshops created an enormous vase as a wedding gift to their Prince Frederick and Princess Mary. The official ceremony of the gift's offering was transmitted through national and international t.v channels and made Tommerup known. Local administration is marketing Tommerup as an ideal living place, with a

healthy economy, high level schools, lovely environment and a very rich cultural life. Tommerup municipality is also part of a net of other Scandinavian villages and in strong relations with a German village. During 2005 they will organise the European cycling tour in their area with more than 500 participants and will take active part in the festivities celebrating 200 years from the birth of their national story teller, Hans Christian Andersen, who was born close to their village.



Kalle Kiipus, the representative of Kilingi Nomme, which will be hosting the 2005 events of the Cultural Villages of Europe Organization, has repeatedly expressed his view on the matter of tourism in his homeland: "Not a single king has ever been born or murdered in Kilingi Nomme, so how can anyone be interested in visiting the place?" or "there is no tourism in Kilingi Nomme, so how can there be cultural tourism?" From our point of view however if more people like the wonderful human being that Kalle is, live in Kilingi Nomme, it is worthwhile visiting the place just to meet

them. Bert Kisjes, representative of **Wijk aan Zee** and President of the Cultural Villages of Europe Organization presented us with the thinking mode of his community in order to attract tourism in their area. They decided that tourism is a necessity mainly for financial reasons but also as a means of diminishing the alienation between local Dutch farmers and big city Dutch people. Wijk aan Zee possessed only two useful cards in this game: their sand dunes and sea coast, that had seen hardly any tourists since the 70s and the steel industry that had driven the tourists away slowly since the 70s. Then they all agreed that not being interested in mass tourism they had to attract Dutch and foreign big city residents, mainly artists or culture oriented people (painters, musicians, sculptors, authors etc) with a strong distaste in luxurious accommodations. They started adjusting their facilities to their clients' needs, they built a sculptors park, concert halls, they entered the steel factory into the area's site seeing, they encouraged local population to really appreciate their homeland, so as to be able to offer better services to their visitors and to be able to advertise their area in a better way. At the same time they struggle to find new ways to market Wijk aan Zee as a vacation destination in the world market using cultural tourism as their strongest weapon to keep their rural area alive.

The people in **Mellionec** and Kreitz-Breizt have realized and accepted a long time ago that their rural origins are the basis of their cultural inheritance and identity expressed through language, music, dance and food Festivities that were organized only on special harvest or wedding days in the past, nowadays present unique chances to meet with other Brettons and communicate with other people. Through the Kreitz-Breizt - European Villages Organization big efforts have been made towards the preservation of the environment, the local dances and sounds, the Breton language, museum and story telling. Their Museum is part of a net with the Porruan Ethnographic and the Stroebeck ones and will be organizing exhibitions and other cultural events in cooperation with one another until at least 2006. In Kreitz Breizt people share a strong belief that their cultural inheritance is the main factor of energy in their homeland.

The **Stroebeck** representatives gave us an adequate description of the Cultural Tourism aspects of today in their area. Nowadays the Harz area - where Stroebeck is located - receives mainly German tourists and about 10% of the total number of visitors are foreigners. They visit Harz to enjoy the many activities (sports and nature) that the Harz mountains provide along with activities offered

in the National Parks, the Museums, the local restaurants, the thermal baths, the site seeing, the tennis tournaments, the various chess events etc. Having realized that Stroebeck would be unable to attract tourists on its own due to lack of accommodation etc they are working towards the increase and improvement of their accommodation facilities, the creating of informative material, the improvement of their rural structures. As traditional jobs and farming income have already become nearly extinct, tourism probably represents the only means of keeping young people in their village and a main factor of economic survivor.

Tourism has been a major factor of economic life for a long time in the Spanish village of **Porrua**, located in Llanes. Possessing a 40 kilometers long coast line, many natural beauties and very good accommodation facilities, Porrua suffered from the same problem Paxos does. Their season was too short, only during the summer months. They soon discovered that through the marketing of a new product in their tourism industry, called cultural tourism, they had found the solution to their problem. They founded the Lacin Organization and through it they worked hard towards making their history and cultural inheritance more well known. They made a fashion of their traditional music, their local dishes, their customs. They funded the Ethnographic Museum's activities, they turned their local customs into cultural events. Nowadays their gaida bands are famous and the Porruan Ethnographic Museum is recognized as the most important in East Asturias.



Sunday, 7th of November

The melancholic mood of that particular afternoon was broken by the famous "Epoque Quartet" from the Czech Republic, who honored Paxos and our distinguished guests by giving a lovely concert. The Town Hall Meeting Room was filled with wonderful music created by Martin's, Vladimir's, Vit's and the second Vladimir's magical fingers. We all enjoyed their musical skills and very warm personalities. Then, came the official dinner at the Paxos Beach hotel, attended also by all the local families, who were priceless helpers in the success of the whole organization, as they hosted all the participating Villages delegations during the past six months. The food, the wine and the music soon turned a very ceremonial dinner into another typical greek party. At a certain point in the evening the Paxos Mayor took the opportunity to offer a small gift to everyone, who volunteered his help in the Organization, as a token of the Municipality's appreciation and gratitude. Each one of them had given a helping hand to the success of the "Cultural Villages of Europe" Organization's goal: to bring different people closer together and to make them realise that behind their differences, exists a large common ground.

The evening was very charming but ended as the lights slowly dimmed along with the "Paxos, Cultural Village of Europe, 2004" Organization.

There is nothing left to do, but thank everyone for everything from the bottom of our hearts!!!

