

Dear friends,  
We are becoming more and more aware of how the written word is being forced from our lives by moving images, how Gutenberg's galaxy has evolved into the galaxy of Lumière. What originally began as an innovative attraction at town fairs became an art form of unprecedented power — one which soon gave birth to such inspired sons as Chaplin, Eisenstein and Buñuel, and today, with the aid of electronics, has developed into the most important vehicle of global culture and communication.

The twist of a plot or an actor's charisma have such a strong effect on our collective imagination that everywhere around the world streets are swept clean of people when the next, continuing episode of a popular television series is aired. In other words, all of us concerned with the making of movies — directors, writers and actors alike — have an unparalleled influence on the needs and tastes, and therefore on the values of modern man. A mere toy — albeit one which became a highly potent mode of communication — has endowed us with a unique power and it is high time to accept the responsibility that goes along with that power.

Films that conquer cinemas around the world — and especially those broadcasted via satellite — tell millions upon millions of viewers our story, what we wish to say. Indeed, we have the power to influence continents. The danger, however, is that this could lead to cultural homogeneity, a downfall in artistic taste and a pollution of intellectual and spiritual values — all of which would gradually suppress national identity, native tongues, our inborn desire for the natural beauty of "otherness" and our respect for the diversity of the universe.

And so it has come to be that this innovative and often admirable "world power" of moving images is slowly threatening the existence of our European film culture. The cinema born in Europe and for many years proof of a

continent rich in tradition and manifold in its ideals, a cinema which offered the world a knowledge of what it meant to be a European and gave birth to such works as "Der letzte Mann", "Jeanne d'Arc", "Henry V", "Potemkin", "Dr. Caligari", "La grande illusion", "Quai des brumes", "Ladri di biciclette", "A bout de souffle", "Viridiana" and "La Strada" — this European cinema is slowly being driven from the screens of our movie theatres and television.

But does this mean that there is nothing left

to do save to mourn our glorious past and bid goodbye to the European film? Or do we still have more to say, more to tell of our past, more to offer of our beliefs and convictions — so much more, in fact, that we make a joint effort to give the world what only we alone can give: the European experience?

Today, at the end of the twentieth century, a human message can be found embedded in our European soil. It documents a continent plagued by war and the murder of brother against brother, divided by political boundaries but held together by a common culture, weighed down under the burden of families torn apart, tormented by unemployment, poverty, injustice and the lack of human



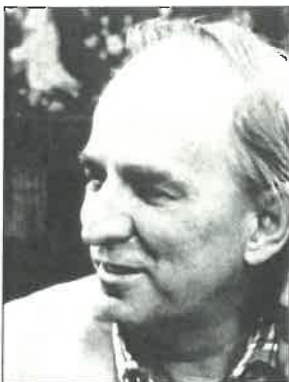
Theo Angelopoulos

*Theo Angelopoulos*



Richard Attenborough

*Richard Attenborough*



Ingmar Bergman

*Ingmar Bergman*



Bernardo Bertolucci

*Bernardo Bertolucci*



Claude Chabrol

*Claude Chabrol*



Federico Fellini

*Federico Fellini*



Claude Goretta

*Claude Goretta*



Dušan Makavejev

*Dušan Makavejev*



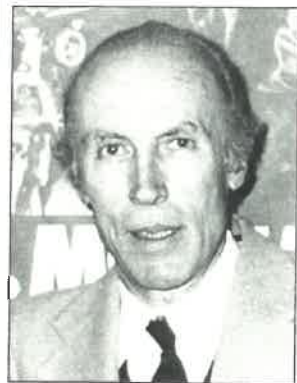
Manoel de Oliveira

*Manoel de Oliveira*



Jifi Menzel

*Jifi Menzel*



Eric Rohmer

*Eric Rohmer*



István Szabó

*István Szabó*



Wim Wenders

*Wim Wenders*

rights, but nonetheless a Europe that deeply believes in a common, hopeful future marked by both joy and anxiety. Indeed, do we still have something to say — something, which if properly expressed, could possibly enrich human understanding on a universal level?

If the answer is "yes", and we want that to be heard, then we must learn to express ourselves according to the changing conditions. Furthermore, we must endeavor to preserve Europe's admirable wealth of diversity, for

only then can the French film be French, the Italian cinema retain its Italian flavor, the Czech and Polish schools of filmmaking remain what they are and German, Hungarian, Swedish, Russian and Greek movies continue to add their own color to the large spectrum of cinematic art. The truer we are to our own selves, in other words, to our

otherness, all the more stronger we are as one. Instead of limiting each other we ought to be striving toward a common identity based on variety, a mutual bond that greets diversity and otherness with open arms. And thus we can protect ourselves from the terror of a standardized taste in art.

These thoughts have led us to create the "European Film Award" and perhaps later a European Film Academy. We have no other goal but to protect European culture by promoting the true value of her cinematography so that it may receive its due attention and find audiences

throughout the world. It is not our intention to compete with film festivals or to rival any present theories and schools of cinematic art. Our prize, to be awarded annually to film professionals for outstanding achievement and to films that represent European culture with great intrinsic integrity, was not conceived to oppose anything, but rather to affirm something. And that is nothing less than our love and our concern for what we call our home: Europe.