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175^e anniversaire du Jardin botanique de Genève

Colloque international sur le thème

Nature et Jardins botaniques au XXI^e siècle

Genève — 2-4 juin 1993

SESSION II — CONCLUSION

Hartmut ERN

I will try to make some closing remarks. We had, I think, a very interesting afternoon with these three contributions. We heard very interesting developments in the Netherlands: I wish that the experience Mr. Reinhard told us about will be flourishing and will bring more success to this interesting garden who, without this very drastic programme, would not exist today if I understood him well. But let us hope that only in the Netherlands the number of working and existing scientific conceived botanical gardens must be reduced so drastically, because it is really a great loss for our botanic gardens community if such things begin to proliferate and I hope that most of our gardens will have a secure future, as I hope as will have Mr. Reinhard's garden now. But we have seen that there are very interesting possibilities to augment the number of visitors to our gardens and I know from my personal experience in Berlin that not all of our gardens have done the possible and the necessary in this direction. I was very glad to see that here in Geneva, very interesting steps have been taken: I saw there are some animals, very nice birds well kept in big cages, there are even some endangered races of house animals from Switzerland (a very interesting approach) and all this I had in my mind when I came to Berlin, but unfortunately for one reason and the other, it has not been possible to realize those ideas up to now in Berlin.

So, let us pass to the second part of the conference and discuss about the conferences of Dr. Andreev and Dr. Hernández-Bermejo. They were within themselves well equilibrated, because in Russia we have to do with a well organized and big programme, which existed for more than forty years and which now is by political movements endangered. We heard from Dr. Andreev that he is very hopeful for the future and that instead of desintegrating, the close cooperation of the Russian botanical gardens is going on. And not only this, but that these gardens now can use the new freedom of cooperation with other countries (especially if I understood him well with the USA) for new targets and new forms of cooperation. This is a very encouraging development and we all wish Dr. Andreev and his colleagues that he may follow this path of international cooperation.

International cooperation was also the beginning of the conference of Dr. Hernández-Bermejo and he spoke about the very first steps he took together with his colleagues towards an establishment of an Iberian-Macaronesian botanical gardens society. He spoke about the foundation phase of the wonderful Córdoba botanical garden, one of the few Mediterranean gardens realized within a very short time and brought to a very good success at the moment. It is a very interesting and

beautiful place, where not only attractive things wait for the visitors but also a lot of scientific and conservation work is done. What I regret personally, very very much, is that it all began within the frame of IABG, that we cooperated and collaborated very well, friendly and as colleagues within our European-Mediterranean division of this IABG, but that in the last years in this field very few has been seen, and that in this conference IABG (well, I mean, the mother company) is rather absent. I hope that if certain difficulties which may have their roots in the political changes in eastern Europe have been surmounted, that then our European-Mediterranean division will reappear at the surface and continue the work we have tried to do for so many years and with nice results I think. I was happy to be witness of the formative phase of the development, which let Spain to be today one of Europe's most active nations within botany. When I was a student in 62-63, I was happy to be invited by Prof. Rivas-Goday and his wife to join them for an excursion to the Montes de Toledo: there, I learned first the beauties of Central Spanish vegetation. An other excursion with Dr. Borja, Dr. Galiano and my friend and colleague Salvador Rivas-Martínez went to Solar de Cabras, la Sierra de Cuenca, showing other beauties of the Iberian vegetation. And when I went to Berlin in 75, I was sent to César Gómez-Campo, the professor of Dr. Hernández-Bermejo who established the beautiful and very important gene bank in Madrid, to learn about the techniques there. Then I went to Madrid, where I knew Santiago Castroviejo and his colleagues and on all my excursions and trips to Spain, I found new friends and new colleagues: I really became an eye-witness of the great development of botany in Spain. This morning already the beautiful Flora Iberica was mentioned, the third volume of which will hopefully be soon on the market, and here we see how a European country uses all the possibilities of international cooperation, of networking, of information and of freedom of travelling, and everything to get to the performance which Dr. Hernández-Bermejo showed us. I think if in some of our countries, caused by economic difficulties, certain amount of pessimism is actually growing, we should look at those examples to be shown that with a lot of personal involvement and a lot of cooperation, beautiful results are still possible today. I say this also to those central and eastern European hearers to encourage them to do the same what Spanish friends have done: you see, it is possible and I'm sure it is still possible in our times and so I hope that the next century will bring the foundation and the proliferation of many new botanic gardens. With this hope and good wishes for you all, I want to close this afternoon session.

Thank you very much!

