

Spring Meeting of the AEHT Presidium and Executive Board, Jesolo Lido, Italy, February 15th-18th 2007

There is a very good reason for holding the AEHT spring meeting in the same place as the autumn Annual Conference: it is to enable the Presidium and the Executive Board to meet with the organisers of the Annual Conference and discuss with them every aspect of the big event: the programme, the accommodation, the meals, the logistics and the venues for the various ceremonies, meetings and dinners. Many members of the Presidium and Executive Board have themselves organised annual conferences in the past and can thus bring to the new organisers their experience and wisdom about managing this mammoth event. We formed the very clear impression that preparations are well under way and that the dynamic and harmonious team from the Elena Cornaro school will be doing an excellent job.

This Spring AEHT meeting got off to a very promising start: your reporter was met at Treviso airport by two smart, smiling students and whisked off to the newly built IPSSAR Massimo Alberini at Lancenigo on the outskirts of Treviso: there a splendid lunch was drawing to a close (and three members of the Presidium and two staff from the Jesolo Lido school were enjoying what seemed to be not their first glass of prosecco), but a place was rapidly set and a delicious meal served while the rest of the guests dawdled over their dessert. Director Pietro Lorenzon certainly runs a fine school – the restaurant and kitchen brigades filed in, proudly introduced themselves and explained which part of the lunch they had prepared.



Kitchen and restaurant crews of IPSSAR Massimo Alberini

But this was just a staging post for Ryanair travellers: we were whisked off to Jesolo Lido and the curiously named Vidi Miramare Delfino Hotel; it is at this time of the year that the Adriatic resorts have their annual face-lift in preparation for the summer season, so this long, thin seaside town some 20 kms north of Venice had a sleepy and half-deserted atmosphere; in fact we learned that in winter the population is around 25,000, rising to 500,000 in the summer! This first evening was the opportunity for the Presidium to meet over dinner in 'Il Giardino' restaurant: we caught up on news from our various schools and countries, and made a start on the following day's agenda.

The Presidium meeting occupied the whole of Friday morning: weighty matters on the agenda included professional sponsorship, our participation in EU programmes, the

new website, as well as reports from the vice-presidents on their various areas of responsibility. Meanwhile helpful and smiling staff from the Elena Cornaro IPSSARCT helped with our various IT and AV needs, as well as providing welcome elevenses; (a note for the curious: Elena Cornaro was the first woman to be awarded a university degree in Italy, by the university of Padua in the 16th century; she had wanted to study theology but as a ‘mere’ woman was not allowed to, so had to make do with philosophy instead!).



Kitchen and restaurant troops of IPSSARCT Elena Cornaro

Lunch was next on the agenda: a splendid spread in the school’s elegant dining room – and as the AEHT president Louis Robert rightly said when thanking the students and staff for the delicious lunch, if this was a foretaste of what awaits us in October then our expectations were very high!



AEHT Head office members amongst students and staff members of the IPSSARCT Elena Cornaro

Two very important persons joined our table: Tania Menazza and Edy Rosin from Destination Travel, an agency which is organising the logistics aspects of the AEHT annual conference: airport transfers, excursions and accommodation. The organisation could not be in better hands than these of these two dynamic and smiling ladies, and Tania is an Elena Cornaro graduate.

We toured the school to see the training kitchens where the culinary arts competitions would take place, and saw a lavishly equipped food science laboratory which gave us ideas about possible additions to the usual programme of contests. We admired the

well-equipped computer labs and sports facilities – the envy of many in the group of visitors.



*Kitchen at IPSSARCT
Elena Cornaro*

Then it was time to set off to town look at the various locations where the Annual Conference would take place. Jesolo Lido is admirably equipped to host large gatherings, and the organisers – led by Laura, Tania and Edy - often showed us two or three possible venues for the same part of the conference. Among the premises we saw were:



Palazzo del Turismo

- Palazzo del Turismo: a vast hall used for concerts and similar events, and the most likely venue for the opening and closing ceremonies;
- Auditorium Vivaldi (used as a theatre and cinema): an adjacent hall for smaller gatherings
- K-Beach Discotheque: probably the location for the final dinner
- Kursaal (a conference venue equipped with interpreting booths): an ideal location for the General Assembly

We also looked at several hotels, some of which were undergoing their annual facelift so a little imagination was needed to appreciate their true splendour;

- Hotel Delaville – on the sea front, the probable base for most students;
- Hotel Principe – currently being totally redecorated, and giving onto the main square;
- Hotel Colombo and the Ambasciatori Palace.

As we visited all these places, it was the opportunity for the organisers to discuss with the Presidium the details of the programme: how to ensure that most participants have lunch and dinner together; what about the number of beds in a double room? Do we hold the prize-giving ceremony together with the final dinner, or separately? Such important matters were debated as we moved around the hotel dining rooms covered in dust sheets, dodging the workmen speeding by with their barrows and implements!

On Friday evening the national representatives began to arrive from the four corners of Europe, and soon we were off by coach to have dinner at 'Da Guido', a splendid typical regional restaurant, in the company of the Mayor of Jesolo Lido Francesco Calzavara accompanied by councillors Carli and Pasqualini. In his speech the Mayor expressed his pleasure that his town was hosting such a prestigious event as the AEHT Annual Conference, and his confidence that the Elena Cornaro school would be equal to the task of organising it; in his reply, Louis Robert praised the arrangements that we had already seen, and told our hosts that what we had already experienced in Jesolo Lido had given us very high expectations of what awaited us in October.



Dinner at the restaurant 'Da Guido' offered by the Mayor of Jesolo Lido, Francesco Calzavara

The Executive Board meeting occupied all of Saturday morning – as usual there were reports from the president and vice-presidents on their areas of responsibility, and announcements about our various plans and projects; the highlight was the presentation by the Jesolo Lido team of the Annual Conference programme. A member of the school's IT team, Vania Luchetta, presented the first version of the conference website and solicited comments from the meeting on her work so far, especially on the matter of the online registration form. Laura Troiero and Ilario Ierace took us through the draft programme, again asking our opinion before the final version was published. Interpretation between French and English was provided by John Rees Smith, the AEHT's interpreter and translator.

While the Executive Board deliberated, another important body was also at work: the Competitions sub-committee held their meeting in the school's library, reviewing last year's competitions and refining the regulations for the contests scheduled for October 2007; this sub-committee has brought much-needed rigour to the AEHT

student competitions, and thanks to them there has been a considerable reduction in problems and complaints from competitors and their teachers.

A much-needed lunch followed, again of the highest quality, superbly well served by the smart and smiling Elena Cornaro students; and then off to Venice, both to see the venue for the gala dinner, and to catch the Venice carnival celebrations. The journey took us by coach to Punta Sabbioni, then by water taxi to Isola San Giorgio: on this island, just across the Grand Canal from the Piazza San Marco, is the Fondazione Cini – an institution devoted to research and study in the humanities. The splendid monastery – the great Palladio had a hand in building it – had been occupied and seriously damaged by Napoleon’s troops at the beginning of the 19th century; it was bought by Count Vittorio Cini (father of Giorgio Cini, tragically killed in an aircraft accident) in memory of his only son, thus preventing the family name from dying out.



Executive Board members in front of San Giorgio Maggiore Church

The AEHT gala dinner is to be held in a series of the former monastic buildings, some of them adorned with priceless tapestries and paintings. What a beautiful setting! But also what a formidable undertaking, to transport over 600 delegates by coach and boat from Jesolo to Venice and back! But we know that Laura can do it!



On San Giorgio Island

We then wandered around the streets of Venice, admiring the carnival masks and costumes and drinking in the joyful atmosphere (together with a few Bellinis in Harry's Bar!), though constantly jostled by the vast crowds (there were 'traffic' police at many crossroads directing the pedestrians to avoid 'traffic' jams); and finally we arrived for dinner at the Caffetteria in the Fondazione Querini Stampalia – at its creation an annex of the Venice Hotel School managed by none other than our old friend Enrico Calenda, known to many of us as the fun-loving, poetry-writing former director of the Barbarigo school. Enrico was on fine form, looking youthful and sprightly, and presided over a very jolly gastronomic meal. We also had the pleasure of meeting Mrs Calenda and Mr Paggiaro, Laura's partner, at this very pleasant event.



On San Giorgio Island in front of Piazza San Marco

And finally back to the boat station to take our traghetto back to Punta Sabbioni: on the quayside we queued up to take our leave of Ilario Ierace and Laura Troiero, resplendent in her Paddington Bear black hat, and doubtless quite relieved that we would be out of her hair fairly soon! Well done Laura, you really did us proud, and we know that October's conference will be magnificent!

Large meetings such as these are always organised by teams of people, often working unnoticed and unacknowledged to ensure our comfort. So here is the opportunity for the AEHT to thank those working behind the scenes: first the energetic group of staff and students at the Elena Cornaro school who arranged our stay, served us coffee, apéritifs and lunches, all to the very highest standard, under the watchful eye of Simone Bonato; Simone with Debora Done were our guides, accompanying us throughout (counting us as we moved from boat to bus to restaurant) and like sheep-dogs making sure no-one went astray. Sara Montagner did a fine job of coordinating all the airport and railway station transfers (no-one got lost!); and Paola Marin was very busy with the Competitions Sub-committee.

And of course we mustn't forget our General Secretary Nadine Schintgen and Treasurer Klaus Enengl who had worked all hours to make sure that everything (especially the meetings) ran smoothly and that we paid our way. Well done, everyone, it all went perfectly!

Text by John Rees SMITH

Pictures by Nadine Schintgen, John Rees Smith, Simone Bonato