

Honoured Chairman! Ladies and Gentlemen!

On behalf of the József Attila University being this time the host of the Eighth Congress of the European Latinamericanists I am pleased to welcome you between the walls of the university, and I wish you to have a nice stay and a successful meeting here. I consider it a great honour to our Alma Mater to have a chance to organize this Congress, and personally I feel it a privilege to assist in the opening of such a remarkable event. Hence also I feel it a pleasant duty to express my gratitude to the Board of the Association of European Historians for Latinamerican Researches for the decision of holding the Congress in Szeged. In this moment I am remembering the late professor Tibor Wittmann who started the research into Latin American history in our University. He passed away untimely one and a half decade ago but the school he founded is flourishing as your presence testifies even for the impartial observer.

However, as my vocation is mathematics and, in addition, I am wearing the heavy chain of the office, I am not the proper person and hence I am not willing to give any preliminary appreciation of the Congress. Surely, more competent speakers will do that. On this occasion — and using this occasion — I would like to tell you a couple of words on József Attila, the eponym of our university, the great poet of our century, whose work is almost inaccessible for non-Hungarians, mainly because of his brilliant way in applying all the possibilities of the Hungarian language. The famous writer Koestler characterized him in the following way: „The unique quality of his poems lies in their miraculous union of intellect and melody. In this respect, I can think of no contemporary poet he could be compared to. His most complex and cerebral poems read like folk songs and sometimes like nursery rhymes; ideology is here completely distilled to music which whether adagio or furioso is always eminently cantabile."

He lived 32 years only, but his poetical heredity is almost as rich as the Holy Scriptures in the sense that you can find a proper text for every day and for every event in the collection of his verses, too. For today, I recommend a piece of his poetry, written 60 years ago in both French and Hungarian as a song of the poor of all continents. It commences with the lines

„Sur les eaux fraîches et immenses  
Les continents nagent en silence."

„On a des pots et des choux ronds, Nous vivons sales and nous mourons."

Each art and science is a tool for the mankind to approach the harmony in the objective sphere he lives in. History, the empirical science of the behaviour of societies, also helps the man to understand himself better and to avoid the ancient deadlocks. Learning the turbulent and admirable history of Latin America gives an important lesson for every country, and I do firmly believe that, similarly to other sciences, it brings us closer — even if by a very small step — to a world, where the continents peacefully swim over the immense waters, the children have rosy cheeks and do not know starvation. By this I declare the Congress of the Association of European Historians for Latinamerican Researches opened.