

Ambassador of Uruguay in Lebanon, H.E. Jorge Luis Jure hosts lecture

9th November 2010, Kulturzentrum, Jounieh, Lebanon,

Reported by Aurelia Eid

The Lebanese Emigration Research Center was invited by the Lebanese- German Association for the promotion of Culture to attend a lecture at the Kulturzentrum entitled *New links between two big small countries: Lebanon and Uruguay* hosted by the Ambassador of Uruguay in Lebanon, H.E. Jorge Luis Jure.

Mrs. Astrid Fischer- Khalife, coordinator of the German Cultural Center, opened proceedings by welcoming all the guests.

The Ambassador started his lecture by thanking Mrs. Fisher-Khalife and Dr. Fawzi Adaimi, the president of Lebanese -German Association for Promotion of Culture, for their hospitality, their reception and their interest in Uruguay.

Firstly, His Excellency explained the reasons behind the expression “two big small countries”. According to him, Lebanon and Uruguay are two of the smallest countries in the world since they are surrounded by bigger countries. Uruguay 177 million Km², are home to three- and –a-half million inhabitants and the country is surrounded by Argentina and Brazil. Lebanon’s 10.452 km² hold four million inhabitants and the country is surrounded by Syria, Israel/Palestine.

Secondly, H.E. Jure gave a review of the history of both Uruguay and Lebanon. He mentioned that the two countries had endured a long period of war, had been colonized and were dependant on the major international forces. Lebanon became independent just over twenty years after its formation, while Uruguay had been a colony for 180 years. Having fought many years to survive both countries have a strong identity.

Thirdly, His Excellency talked about the success of the two countries despite their difficult history. Though small in size with modest beginnings, the two countries have been known for their strong economic and social development.

In Lebanon, this development started with the reconstruction of Beirut after the war, an event represented in an exhibition entitled *The memory of Beirut* which toured around Uruguay. Urbanism downtown, the reconstruction of the airport and the making of good roads were also signs of this development. Lebanon has liberty of expression and freedom of the press. Lebanon and Uruguay both have a high level of human development according to the UN classification. They have both a high rate of growth despite the world economic crisis.

Uruguay is the first exporter of software in Latin America, and it exports rice and beef meat. It is considered the first country in the Americas in renewable energy. It ranks twenty third from top of the list of countries graded from least to most corrupt and Lebanon is likewise a democratic country. Uruguay is classified as the fifth country in protection of environment. Uruguay is characterized by its preoccupation with social equality, women’s conditions, the most

destitute, and individual liberty. In 1875, the civil marriage became the only kind valid. Women first had their right to vote in 1931.

In 2010, Uruguay is considered the most egalitarian country in the world.

During this presentation, three Uruguayan poems, their poets are: Fernan Silva Valdes, Delmira Agustini and Juana De Ibarbourou were read out in French by Mrs. Fischer.

Afterwards, Mr. Jure continued the lecture. He talked about the obstacles that Uruguay has faced, due to the governance of military dictators and guerrillas. Then he talked about the ancient and new links between Lebanon and Uruguay. Lebanon and Uruguay have always tried to maintain good relations with their neighbors, defending at the same time their dignity and their rights. Uruguay has taken 100 years to delimit its frontiers. This country is a member of international organizations.

Uruguay is considered the homeland of thousands of Lebanese descendants, coming from the North, from Batroun, Koura, Kesrwan, Jbeil, who settled in the rich territories of Uruguay in order to carry on their own business and commerce. Like Uruguay, Lebanon has always a democratic vocation. Lebanon and Uruguay have always protected the rights of minorities.

There was also an interval to listen to Uruguayan music. La Cuparsita; the people's national anthem, the Milonga a dance of African people in Uruguay, and the rural music.



Photo taken at the 23Kulturzentrum H.E. Jorge Luis Jure with LERC Intern Ms. Aurelia Eid (Nov 2010)

To end the lecture, Ambassador Jure stressed the links between Lebanon and Uruguay. Those links are diplomatic: visit of President Kamil Chamoun to Uruguay in 1954, visit of the vice-president of Uruguay Alberto Abdalla from Koura in the 60s. Uruguay and Lebanon signed a

cultural agreement in 1999. There are many Lebanese personalities in Uruguay, such as painters, sculptors, deputies, senators and many Lebanese organizations. The links are also educational and cultural, The Cervantes Institute in Lebanon, Lebanese Emigration Research Center, German Cultural Center in Lebanon (Goethe Institute) and many others. Many events in Lebanon are related to the Uruguayan culture; Lebanon invites many singers, musicians, painters. And in Uruguay, there are many exhibitions about Lebanon and Lebanese handicrafts.

At the end, a toast was proposed to the guests and there was an exhibition about Uruguay with photos, engravings, posters.