

# I. Congress of the Humanist International

## Hommage to Galileo Galilei

**In Piazza di Santa Croce, Florence -  
on the occasion of the first Humanist International, January 7, 1989**

*"I, Galileo Galilei, professor of mathematics of the University of Florence, publicly reject my doctrine that the sun is the centre of the world and that it doesn't move, and that the earth is not the centre of the world and that it does move. With a sincere heart and true faith, I abjure, curse, and hate the above mentioned error and heresy, and also any other error, heresy or sect against the holy church."*

This is the text of the retraction exacted under threat of torture from Galileo on June 22, 1633, by the tribunal of the Inquisition.

Galileo retracted his doctrine in order to avoid the fate of Giordano Bruno, condemned to the stake with a piece of wood stuck in his mouth to prevent him from talking and burned in Campo di Fiori in Rome on a winter day in 1600.

Giordano Bruno, who had proclaimed the infinity of mankind and the universe, the existence of countless worlds...

Only after the centuries the "descendants" of those who had forced on Galileo his retraction have reluctantly recognised their mistake, and Giordano Bruno still waits for justice.

But neither torture nor the stake have stopped courageous men and women from getting hold of a telescope and aiming it, not only in the direction of the stars, but also, in the direction of those who are oppressed and who suffer.

Yet they, the powerful of the earth, have quickly understood that the New Science could be used to nourish their appetite and extend their privileges and thus have educated "a lineage of inventive gnomes," as Berthold Brecht has called them, ready to sell their science to any end and for any price.

These intelligent and blind gnomes have found all the ways to join nature to the will of power of their masters and have covered the earth with death machines.

Others have used their genius to invent new means of manipulating, silencing, and putting the conscience of the people to sleep. More sophisticated and "polished" means but no less painful and inhuman than the sticks stuck in Giordano Bruno's mouth.

Undoubtedly, we know other countless men and women have used the New Science to alleviate the fatigue and the hunger, the pain and the suffering of humanity, in order to remove the gag from the mouth of the oppressed, in order to give them voice and faith.

But we also know that today, as the second millenium of the West comes to an end, the survival of the human species is in danger, and over our own common home, the earth, hovers the nightmare of ecological catastrophe.

It is for this reason that we, humanists from the four corners of the earth, here in front of the building that houses Galileo's tomb ask all scientists of the earth to finally use science for the exclusive benefit of humanity.

With the voice that was eliminated from Giordano Bruno--and likewise eliminated from millions of oppressed people--with that voice that today resounds in this square, we launch this calling: that in all universities, all research institutions, an oath be instituted, a solemn vow similar to the one created by Hippocrates for the medical profession in the dawn of the West, of using science exclusively to vanquish pain and suffering, to humanise the earth.