

**The 10th Annual Networking Event of the European-American Chambers of
Commerce in the United States – May 20, 2010**

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It was a balmy spring evening in New York when hundreds of business folks meandered along the lanes of Central Park to reach the venue for a fabulous gathering at the Boat House of the various European Chambers of Commerce based in the city. This year, name tags bore not only the names and businesses of the attendees but also the flag of their sponsoring Chamber. I wore the Portuguese flag with pride, over my very Italian name! A glance at names and flags quickly revealed that I was not alone – and my analytical mind soon concluded: “This is a reflection of ‘unity’ in the European Union – and a tribute to commerce for making it so!”

Soon I discovered I was not the only economist present. Wandering about I encountered another fellow economist – under the Italian flag. He inquired about my flag disparity but I replied: “Business is business!” We exchanged a few pleasantries, compared notes on Portugal and Italy as to their status as “PIIGS” then went our separate ways before we could display discord on the economic outlook – as economists are often wont to do!

Professions and businesses represented varied all over the lot: insurance brokers, travel agents, photographers, tax accountants, translators, at least two economists, government promotion agencies, airlines, and many more! There were lots of lawyers, bankers abounded, techies tendered their trade, and real estate agents rallied the ready.

My Portuguese flag did attract a gaggle of Greeks and once again I relied on my economic “numbers” to distinguish Portugal. They promised to invite me to their events.

The food was excellent from pasta to nuts. Libations flowed from blue-bottled water to Belgian beer to red and white wines. There even was Champagne ... to top off the evening while a half moon settled over the adjoining lake as the massive crowd slowly began thinning out with pockets and purses bulging with business cards and new prospects for the next morning’s commerce.

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