

interest in fomenting conflict, with reference to the visit made to Sudan last year by the archbishop of Canterbury.

The perspectives for success

Despite the apparent differences of approach manifest in the conference, there is no doubt that the Khartoum gathering represents a giant step forward in the fight to defeat the geopolitical statists of "religious conflict" and to mobilize the forces of religion to strive for the Good. The participation of Cardinal Arinze, along with the papal nuncio in Khartoum at this conference, attests to the continuing improvement in relations between the two faiths in Sudan, following the historic visit of Pope John Paul II to Khartoum in February 1993. Also present at the recent conference was His Grace Archbishop Gabriel Zubeir Wako (who had been unable to attend the April 1993 conference). The Khartoum archbishop delivered a major speech to the gathering which began with the revealing statement, "The purpose of this paper is to convince myself that there are good prospects for a lasting inter-religious dialogue in the Sudan and among the Sudanese people." Archbishop Zubeir argued that Christians and Muslims "should cooperate towards finding joint solutions to problems besetting the country . . . precisely by placing God at the center of people's communal and individual lives. All believe that religion ought to be a unifying force in society." Speaking frankly, the archbishop warned against glorifying the Sudanese situation, and spoke of "religious tensions, conflicts, and uncertainties" felt by Christians in the country. Acknowledging the sincerity of the Muslim majority desire for dialogue, he called for a vast educational effort, to lay the groundwork for acceptance of diversity. It is through a "search for what unites Muslims and Christians" that the dialogue may succeed.

In addition to the unprecedented, high-level Vatican representation at the conference, another encouraging sign was the "spirit of Cairo" which pervaded the proceedings. Not only Dr. Turabi and Dr. Atabani, but also Dr. Musa Keilani, on behalf of the World Islamic Council, from Jordan, and Sudanese President General Al-Bashir, referred to the United Nations conference on population, held in Cairo in September, as a turning point in Muslim-Christian relations. As Dr. Adel Husein, from the Egyptian *As Sha'ab* newspaper, said that in the closing session at Cairo, "the believers of this world saw that they are a power and can change the agenda. The Vatican moved," he said, "and the Muslims moved, too." This was "the first time in history that such a battle took place, where the two religions joined hands to oppose the New World Order." Summing up the accomplishment of the Khartoum meeting, Dr. Adel said, "What Dr. Turabi said, in stressing the need to create a common front, one battle against evil, is not a call, but is becoming a reality. In Egypt, people started defending religious values, Al Azhar and the church, now they are following a new path. This conference should become an effective movement."

Interview: Mohammed Masjed Gami

How Iran, Vatican cooperated on Cairo

The Iranian ambassador to the Holy See was interviewed in Khartoum on Oct. 12. EIR asked His Excellency to explain the background to the cooperative effort of the Vatican and Iran at the U.N. Conference on Population in Cairo.

Mohammed Masjed Gami: It goes back to January, when the Secretary Responsible for Relations with States of the State Secretariat of the Vatican called me, regarding the preparatory conference to be held in New York. He asked for the cooperation of my country with the Vatican. Two months later, in March, [Vatican Secretary of State] Cardinal Sodano and the Secretary of the State Secretariat Responsible for Relations with States, Msgr. Jean-Louis Touran, with two cardinals, Cardinal Etchegaray, the head of *Justitia et Pax*, and Cardinal López Trujillo, responsible for the Pontifical Council for the Family, invited all the ambassadors to the Holy See, to explain to them the Vatican's position. Later, the pope became very active. In some speeches, he spoke openly of the Cairo conference and the preparatory conference in New York.

The head of the Vatican delegation for the New York meeting was Monsignor [Diarmuid] Martin, who is an Irishman, a fine gentleman and a close friend with whom I had had contact before. Before his departure from Rome to New York, he came to our embassy at the Holy See, for the fourth time. I told him to make contact with our embassy at the United Nations in New York, responsible for this conference. The New York preparatory conference was for three weeks. During the conference, those responsible from the Vatican, Monsignor Celli (Undersecretary for Relations with States) and Monsignor Carrascosa, asked for full cooperation on the New York conference. The situation was very critical; the problem was that even Muslim and Christian countries did not want to cooperate with the Vatican. The only country with some sensitivity to the issue was Iran. Then I informed them that Malta was active, as I had been told. They asked for the full support of Iran. I was in daily contact with our embassy at the U.N., they did a lot.

After that conference, I met Vatican people who complained about some Islamic countries which were in favor of the U.N. Cairo conference program. The situation in New York was depressed. After the conference, I told Monsignor Martin and others in the Vatican, "Let's see the text [of the

U.N. program] and the points we can discuss.” We had a lot of exchange. By July, we had done a lot. I gave some interviews. One of the best of them was in [the Italian Catholic monthly] *30 Giorni*, in which I explained our points about the conference. *30 Giorni* interviewed other ambassadors in the Vatican, too. This interview had a vast impact on public opinion in Italy. At the end of July or the beginning of August, the Vatican ambassador in Iran Monsignor Panciroli met the acting Foreign Minister Mohammed Hashemi, the brother of the Iranian President, and asked for full support and cooperation. I met Monsignor Panciroli and promised him we would do our best in Cairo. During August in Teheran we discussed the matter in the foreign and health ministries, which were the ministries mainly responsible for the conference. We had decided on the minister of health as the head of the delegation, but later we discovered that if the head of the delegation were a religious man who knows politics, the situation would change. The head of the delegation was His Excellency Taskhiri. For the Vatican case, they decided to send me also. There was one from the Health Ministry and two from the Foreign Ministry who specialized on the text. I went from Rome to Cairo.

The conference began on a Monday. The situation in Cairo was disappointing. The main problem was that many countries did not have any idea of the text. There was not enough courage on their part to participate in any active discussion. On Wednesday, we met with Taskhiri, the head of the Al Azhar, the Mufti of Egypt, and another, independent religious man named Imam Ghazali. Taskhiri explained the situation of the conference. I met Monsignor Martino (the apostolic nuncio at the United Nations), who headed the delegation, and his colleague Monsignor Martin. We discussed the text Thursday morning with an expert from the Foreign Ministry. The State Secretary [of the Vatican] visited Taskhiri and told him, they were ready for suggestions from Iran, because they knew that we knew the text. The Egyptian delegation then had close cooperation with us, as well as the Pakistani and Vatican delegations. We had more than daily contact. From Thursday to Friday, some Latin American countries brought up their points, Honduras, El Salvador, and in some cases, Nicaragua. The best were Benin and Malta. In the second part of the conference, the situation changed a lot. In the last days, the cooperation was very clear. The northern European countries, especially Norway and Sweden, but also the European Union—Germany was the representative of the EU, which spoke on its behalf—Canada and the United States began to understand that the situation was not as they had supposed.

As you saw, the results were excellent. They changed some paragraphs and accepted our considerations regarding other phrases. As an observer, I told you, the results were excellent. I heard from other delegates that this was the first time in the history of U.N. conferences, that people of faith have obliged the other side to accept their codes and religious

values. To speak adequately about the results of the conference it would be necessary to write books, because this was a symbol of the rapid changes of social and moral conditions of countries which want to have some religious values and principles and to preserve them. This is the reality.

Interview: Cardinal Francis Arinze

Permanent association needed in Sudan

The following interview was conducted by EIR with His Eminence Cardinal Francis Arinze, formerly a bishop in Nigeria who is now in the Roman Curia, on Oct. 9. He is in charge of Dialogue with Non-Christians for the Vatican and a member of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, as well as author of a well-known series of catechetical lectures on videotape.

EIR: What is your view of how the conference is proceeding so far?

Arinze: The most important thing is if the Christians and Muslims in the Sudan form a permanent association and if they will want that association to continue. Within such, they will listen to one another, they will try to understand one another, if there are problems they will raise them and face them straight on. That is the most important thing. Calling people from many countries for me has secondary importance. It is not the most important thing. It is not wrong, but it is not the primary thing, because the people from outside cannot understand the internal situation in two days.

EIR: There was some criticism of your speech, to the effect that it was interpreted to mean that you thought the Sudanese should not take part in the inter-religious dialogue internationally. Was this a misinterpretation?

Arinze: Yes, of course. Whoever said that, did not understand what I said, or was not listening or did not understand my recommendations. Read my paper. Of course, when I said, the most important thing is that the Sudanese have a permanent association, dialogue will have roots in the place, of course that is primary. I said, an international inter-religious dialogue is a different thing. It is also important. But it is not the same thing as a permanent association between Christians and Muslims in the Sudan. Of course they are different steps. You will first have Christians and Muslims in Sudan talking to one another in a permanent association. Only after that will they will be in a good position to meet