

courageous contribution has certainly been extremely relevant. Tell us, if you would, your impressions of the meetings you had in Belgrade with Slobodan Milosevic.

Dr. Khaja: Milosevic is a self-righteous, arrogant dictator. His tragedy is that of any other dictator who begins to lie in order to maintain his power, keeps repeating the lie to everybody around him, and then he himself begins to believe the lie. That is the same notion of the Big Lie that caused mass hysteria. Consequently, the view in Belgrade and Serbia is 180 degrees opposite to what is believed here in the West. No amount of dialogue can convince Serbians that the aggressor is Milosevic and that the victims are the people of Kosovo, just as the people of Bosnia were. Serbian people have been conditioned by this propaganda, and now they are facing the constant NATO bombings, so you can easily imagine that they are extremely angry. This has been the prevailing condition at the present time in Belgrade.

EIR: In 1993, I was part of an organization called International Parliamentarians Against Genocide in Bosnia, which brought a delegation of ten members of Congress and parliaments to Sarajevo during the siege. I remember, in those horrible times, how strong, despite everything, were the hopes of the Bosnians, of President Alija Izetbegovic, that after all the sacrifices, finally they would be able to have a country, a process of reconstruction and establishment of a modern economy, of a future. This did not happen; the war ended, but peace did not come. There was not the promised economic reconstruction.

There was a proposal at that time for a new Marshall Plan for the Balkans. Recently, President Clinton has talked about a Marshall Plan for the Balkans in the postwar period. A call for the reconstruction of the area was recently issued by the former Chief of Cabinet of President Izetbegovic, Faris Nanic, and by Schiller Institute founder, Helga Zepp-LaRouche. The fact that Bosnia was not allowed to have reconstruction brought the country to a present potential danger of a new ethnic explosion.

Looking at the large masses of suffering, desperate Kosovars, we are reminded that the alternative is clear: Either they will be sent away from Kosovo permanently and/or put in some form of concentration camp, or a large program of reconstruction is needed immediately in the Balkans, a Marshall Plan that obviously is to be extended to the whole Third World.

Dr. Khaja: I think there is a discussion on what will follow after peace and security are established. I think one of the options being discussed now, is to have a Marshall Plan, for that area at least, and I think President Clinton struck a chord and is probably committed to it. How other nations will participate in it? Germany has shown some willingness in the past to do something about it. Yes, indeed, there will be a need for massive reconstruction for the whole area, so that with economic stability, these problems which have

always caused conflicts, will go away. After all, we are becoming more and more cognizant of the fact that if you have economic growth, this will stabilize the political system. Yes, definitely we have to look at this.

EIR: Dr. Khaja, would you comment on the future of your organization and the role of the American Muslim community, not only for the United States, but as a reference point for the rest of the world?

Dr. Khaja: I think the American Muslim community is beginning to realize it is the most important asset of the whole Muslim world. I say that, because if one looks to the Muslim world, from Mauritania to Malaysia, there are areas of the world where there is some freedom, but there is no education, and there are some areas where there is education, but no freedom. Where else in the Muslim world, or anywhere else Muslim, have both of these elements: knowledge and freedom, which are part of the teaching of the Koran? The American Muslims are uniquely placed because of that, and they will continue to play a more positive role, which will have a necessary impact on all the Muslim countries also.

Interview: Dr. Muhammad
Aslam Cheema

Balkan reconstruction is the key to peace

Dr. Cheema, a former president of the American Muslim Council, is now its treasurer and a member of its board of directors. He is a retired surgeon, who has dedicated his life to giving a voice and an adequate role to the American Muslim community. He explains: "I retired early for health reasons, but this gave me the opportunity to serve the community. I am totally wedded to the idea that the American Muslim community has now reached the point that it has to start shouldering the responsibilities that fall upon it. And I am now literally spending all of my time pursuing these objectives." Dr. Cheema was interviewed by Umberto Pascali on May 7.

EIR: Dr. Cheema, this morning we were at the White House, and National Security Adviser Samuel Berger came to talk to the AMC convention participants. Someone commented that, whether one agrees or disagrees with everything he said, it is striking that, after a few hours of sleep back from Germany where he accompanied President Clinton to deal with the Kosovo issue, Mr. Berger came to give his remarks personally to the American Muslims. What was your evaluation of this

morning's meeting, and what does this convention want to achieve?

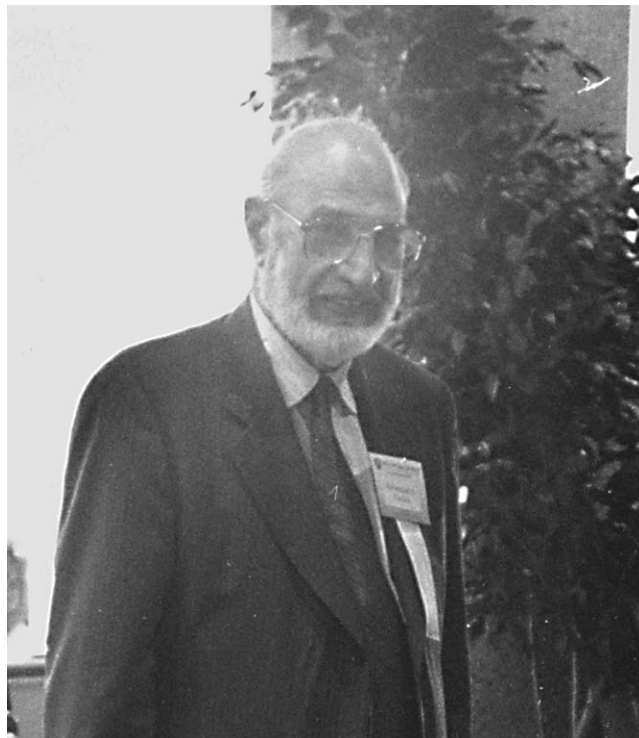
Dr. Cheema: What Mr. Berger said this morning was very interesting. Some of the things I totally agree with and some I don't. The AMC does not agree with all of them, but we need to keep a positive attitude, to welcome the things we were told, to keep the doors open, so that we can change the posture, the thinking, and the actions of the American government, to be more friendly and positive toward the Muslims, in this country and, of course, worldwide. What he said was fine, but there are things that need to be worked out further with the administration.

EIR: I was discussing with Dr. Khaja the parallel between the terrible situation in Kosovo and what happened in Bosnia, especially concerning the fact that after the hot phase of the genocide against Bosnia, the country was not allowed to have a real reconstruction and a real economy. The problem of Kosovo now is even more dramatic. You saw President Clinton's reference recently to the need for a Marshall Plan for the Balkans. The former Chief of Cabinet of Bosnian President Izetbegovic, Faris Nanic, and the founder of the Schiller Institute, Helga Zepp-LaRouche, presented an urgent and detailed appeal on this issue. The proposal is circulating among elites and governments in the Balkan area and worldwide. Indeed, we have a similar situation in Iraq, where the economy has been destroyed, and the country is still under bomb attack. In reality, the chance for peace and survival, as several delegates to this convention were stressing, can come only from the re-establishment of a viable economy.

Dr. Cheema: You presented to me several issues. Each issue has its own merits.

What is happening in Bosnia is not what was hoped for, and what will happen in Kosovo is not known at this point. In fact, the only thing I can see in the position of the American government and NATO, is that they are asking for three basic things: return of the refugees, presence of some kind of effectively armed international group to maintain the peace and to help the Kosovars to move back into their homes—or what remains of their homes—and then, of course, the third point is that they are helped to rebuild all that was destroyed. As Sandy Berger said this morning, the refugees have been placed in different locations, including the United States, but all of this is only temporary, and they will go back to their homes, and we will help them to settle down again, and develop their own potential, their own housing, and their own economics. This is obviously something we will have to work on, and we will work for it.

As far as Iraq is concerned, there is a tremendous amount of bigotry in some of the statements coming out, as was brought out by the speaker in the noon session [Edward Peck, former U.S. Ambassador to Iraq]. We need to work with the American administration to try to prove to them that the present continuous bombings are not helping anybody. In my



American Muslim Council official Dr. Muhammad Aslam Cheema. "We very much welcome the fact that the President is already thinking in terms of possible economic help and developmental help to the Kosovars, and a Marshall Plan-like proposal for the whole Balkans."

opinion, it's not helping the Iraqi people, it's not helping Saddam, it's not helping the American people, it's not helping anybody, other than increasing the misery and suffering of the Iraqi people, the old people, health problems, hunger problems. We have to further raise this issue and have changes in this policy.

EIR: Do you think that this repeated reference that President Clinton made recently to the necessity to launch a new Marshall Plan for the Balkans, could give us some optimism that we can go now in this direction, that is, to help create prosperity, and, politically, in fact to create new allies and friends for the United States, instead of a policy based on military power?

Dr. Cheema: My answer to this question is that we very much welcome the fact that the President is already thinking in terms of possible economic help and developmental help to the Kosovars, and a Marshall Plan-like proposal for the whole Balkans. It is very important. But, as it is now, more details need to be worked out. The initial step is that these people have to go back to their homes, that the proportions of the different populations must be maintained the way they were before the atrocities, and that whatever autonomy or independence will come out, development and reconstruction is the key problem to be solved.