

Seton Hall Conference: Dialogue Of Civilizations Comes To America

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

On the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, which commemorated 2001 as the Year of the Dialogue Among Civilizations, a very important form of dialogue unfolded at Seton Hall University, in South Orange, New Jersey. This university's School of Diplomacy and International Relations had been chosen as the coordinating secretariat of the dialogue. The symposium featured Iranian President Seyyed Mohammad Khatami, who originally proposed, in 1998, that the UN dedicate the year 2001 to the dialogue; and His Eminence Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, Archbishop of Washington, D.C. Rabbi Arthur Schneier, founder of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, was unable to attend personally, but sent a written message.

In opening the symposium, held on Nov. 9, University President Msgr. Robert Sheeran took pains to emphasize the historic character of the meeting. Addressing the students present, he stressed, that "if 'today' belongs to the distinguished leaders gathered on the stage, then 'tomorrow' belongs to you. The future is *yours*. . . . Indeed you *are* the future." He appealed to the students to seize the unique opportunity made to them: "*Remember* what you see here this afternoon and remember what you hear. *Learn* from it. Because the way forward . . . the way toward a 'tomorrow' of justice and peace . . . a 'tomorrow' that is yours to build . . . is being modelled for you—here and now."

Dialogue Of The Pope With Islam

The students were not to be disappointed. What unfolded was a warm exchange between President Khatami and Cardinal McCarrick, which reflected the deepening dialogue between Pope John Paul II and Islam. Khatami stated that today's world, with its "diverse plurality, on the one hand," and "unprecedented inter-relatedness, on the other, has the potential to lead into interminable war and devastation," or, it could be a "harbinger of an era of peace for humanity"—if dialogue succeeds. Khatami stressed the power of love, and the centrality of religion in such a dialogue:

"Love and compassion are divine gifts to the human soul, which provides the very keystone of relationships between human beings with God, among human beings themselves, and between humans and the universe. Humanity today, more than ever, needs to appreciate this fundamental tenet of religiosity and spirituality. Believers in all religions share in this

crucial understanding even though in human history, we can regrettably see that unjustifiable human error has often turned religion into an instrument aimed at justifying inhuman behavior and restricting the scope of human interaction. But this contradicts the purpose of God and divine messengers.

"Our call to Dialogue among Civilizations is an invitation to replace the discourse of violence and hostility with a discourse of mutual understanding and reason. Any dialogue among civilizations and cultures, is incumbent upon taking into consideration the most fundamental cultural and civilizational element, that is, religion, beyond historical prejudice and fanaticism.

Khatami underscored the need to seek out points of common understanding, and consider points of difference, as secondary: "In such a dialogue we should emphasize bright points of essential concordance and leave aside divisive issues, which derive not from the essence of religions but only from historical factional conditions, and only when fanaticism prevails over fairness."

The Iranian President distinguished sharply between this message in true religion, and its distortion:

"One cannot but wonder in bewilderment at the insurmountable gap between Jesus Christ, who was all for love, beauty, freedom, and compassion, on the one hand, and the appalling character of a cardinal who sides with Satan and whom Dostoyevsky mockingly calls 'the Grand Inquisitor' in his *Brothers Karamazov*.

"The gap is also insurmountable between the teachings of Moses, who strove not only to set the Israelites free from the injustice of the Pharaoh, but indeed aimed to free humanity from slavery and to establish justice, on the one hand, and the violent racist misinterpretation that has driven a nation out of its homeland, and subjects them to perpetual suppression and massacre in their own land.

"Islam too calls 'in the Name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful' in the Holy Koran as well as in all Islamic ritual, and stresses God's compassion and mercy as prevailing over His other attributes. But unfortunately we see how an obscurantist misrepresentation of Islam terrorizes the world and whoever does not share in its fanatical illusions, subjecting innocent women, men, and children to blind wrath misnamed a Holy War or Jihad."

Referring to the Sept. 11 events, but without mentioning the "anti-terrorist coalition" currently waging war in Afghanistan, Khatami called for a "coalition aimed at establishing peace, a peace based upon justice." "The most crucial point would be for us to emphasize our many commonalities, the most significant of which is the belief in one God Who is wise, just, compassionate, and merciful," and to "recognize the intimate connection between the human spirit and the spirit of the universe that is eternal and everlasting." In the Koran and the Bible, both the Old and New Testament, Khatami said, "the human individual is stressed," and "religions teach us that the central prominence of human beings in the universe . . . stems from our being addressed by the Divine

. . . which elevates the human spirit and thereby makes possible the establishment of justice in the world.”

Love For The Whole Human Family

Cardinal McCarrick, one of three American clerics to visit China in 1998, was elevated to the College of Cardinals by Pope John Paul II on Feb. 21, 2001. Cardinal McCarrick was outspoken in his recognition of Khatami's stature, and the significance of his dialogue proposal, saying to the Iranian leader, "President Khatami, you have already earned a privileged place in the history of your country and the world." The Cardinal said he was "delighted and somewhat awed to be sharing this podium with you."

In his presentation of the dialogue, Cardinal McCarrick reached back nearly 40 years, to the time when Pope Paul VI "noted that the key to true dialogue is 'consideration and esteem for others, and understanding and kindness.'" Then he recalled Khatami's 1998 proposal for the UN, and its acceptance, for 2001 (see *EIR*, Sept. 22, 2000). Following that, "This year, Pope John Paul II, in his World Day of Peace message on Jan. 1, 2001, invited 'believers in Christ, together with all men and women of good will, to reflect on the theme of dialogue between cultures and traditions.'" He went on to quote the Pontiff's statement, that he was pleased with the UN's decision. "In this he made common cause with President Khatami for such a dialogue which might lead to reconciliation, harmony, and cooperation among different cultures and religious traditions."

The Cardinal also emphasized the power of love. Addressing the impact of the events of Sept. 11, he said that they had "deepened the love my fellow Americans have for their nation." But, he warned, "we must remind ourselves that we must couple this love of country with love for the whole human family," and not fall into the "temptations" of "nationalism and xenophobia." Furthermore, he said, "we must recognize that our culture, like every culture, necessarily has its limitations. To realize this, we must all seek a deeper and unprejudiced knowledge of other cultures," and recognize, as the church does in its 2000 years of history, "that 'beneath all that changes, there is much that is unchanging.'" This continuity is based upon the essential and universal character of God's plan for humanity."

Cardinal McCarrick chose to conclude his remarks, recalling the meeting between Khatami and the Pope. "Let me conclude with a beautiful story. It is the story of the historic meeting of President Khatami and the Holy Father. As these two extraordinary world leaders parted, the frail Shepherd of the Universal Church thanked the President for what the Pope called 'an important and promising day,' to which President Khatami replied that 'following this meeting with you, I return to my country full of hope for the future.'"

Seton Hall University President Monsignor Sheeran had not exaggerated, in characterizing the event as historic. It was, indeed, a worthy continuation of the dialogue between Islam and Christianity.

Macedonia Connects U.S. Ambassador To KLA Terrorists

by Umberto Pascali, from Skopje

Widespread exposés in European and Russian press in recent weeks have echoed what this magazine documented in its May 4 issue: that the ethnic Albanian Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) is directly linked to the Afghan Taliban and al-Qaeda in drug trafficking, weapons trafficking, and terrorist training. Despite this, a new bloody KLA escalation has again hit the north of neighboring Macedonia, without response from the West; and worse, perhaps with the encouragement of U.S. Ambassador James Pardew. On Nov. 12, a terrorist gang ambushed, with a precision suggesting sophisticated advance intelligence, a Macedonian police armored vehicle, killing three and seriously injuring three more.

This time, however, Macedonia reacted, directing the spotlight at some of the "puppetmasters." On Nov. 14, the main Macedonian daily, *Dnevnik*, accused the U.S. "facilitator," Ambassador Pardew. The truth-telling strategy recommended to Macedonia by Lyndon LaRouche, in a statement on Sept. 3 in Reston, Virginia, and on Oct. 5, in interviews on Macedonian national television, seems to have been carefully considered. The irregular warfare waged by the KLA is one element of a broader psychological war aimed at breaking Macedonia's moral ability to resist.

Any time the Macedonians have rejected, even partially, an order coming from NATO, particularly its Anglo-American component, the KLA has been deployed with such deadly precision, that observers on the scene believe the terrorists are accessing sophisticated intelligence, allegedly received through satellite communications controlled by certain NATO components.

This time *Dnevnik* spelled out the modus operandi. "The special American envoy, James Pardew, without any mandate, undermined the plan of the Interior Ministry to secure the site . . . of one of the mass graves containing the bodies of Macedonian civilians kidnapped and massacred a few months ago [by the KLA].

"Having unsuccessfully tried to block this plan during talks with the leaders of the country, Pardew decided to deny any logistical support [by NATO] for this action." Then the newspaper delivered its punch: "Pardew also alerted the [KLA] 'bosses' of this area to organize an adequate welcome for the police, *Dnevnik* has been told by high-level government sources."

On the basis of these sources, the newspaper tracks down,