

Dialogue of Civilizations In the Golden City of Prague

by Our Correspondent

A conference of the World Public Forum—Dialogue of Civilizations took place in Prague from May 4-6, on the theme, “Europe in the 21st Century: a Meeting Place of Civilizations.” About 250 politicians, church representatives, scientists, intellectuals, and artists achieved an exchange of ideas on Europe’s future during the three days of meetings.

After an official reception in the Czech Republic’s National Museum on Wenzel Square, the conference convened in the Zofin Palace on idyllic Moldau Island. All the contributions and discussions—four days after the expansion to the East of the European Union (EU)—were occupied with the new situation this has produced for Europe. The overall coordinators of the conference were the Czech Republic’s former Prime Minister Milos Zeman, and Vladimir I. Yakunin, the chairman of the board of trustees of Russia’s Center of National Glory.

Most participants reflected the implications of the shift in axioms brought about in Europe by the current period of radical change. So Milos Zeman declared in his opening speech, that one should not equate the idea of Europe with the European Union; it were better to speak of European Civilization, in which Russia, according to his conception, must be counted. This idea, that Europe is the home of many nations and peoples, in which many political, scientific, and civilizational changes are taking place—and is therefore the natural platform for the dialogue among these nations and should not be limited to the borders of the European Union—was also expressed in the conference’s concluding address.

Vladimir Yakunin reported on the progress of the “dialogue among civilizations” in the past two years’ meetings of the World Forum, whose ideas have found increasing resonance in such countries as Russia, India, Greece, Iran, Italy, Germany, the Czech Republic, and many others. He remembered also the spiritual inspirator of these dialogues, J.C. Kapur of India. Not only must the relations between the EU and Russia be built up, but equally important is the improvement of the bilateral relations of all these nations—between Russia and the Czech Republic, for example. The theme of national sovereignty remains important despite its partial loss. Yakunin stressed the role of non-governmental public institutions, particularly in discussing human rights and dignity. Unfortunately, a marked paradigm-shift has taken place, by which, for example, “love” is more and more changed to “sex”

and “calling” to “career.” The media’s role is often negative, and by the constant showing of terror, of naked bodies, of corpses and violence, has driven a systematic destruction of the boundaries of the human capability for compassion and feeling.

The Declaration of Rhodes

The President of the Schiller Institute, Helga Zepp-LaRouche, gave an address on the theme of the universal image of man which must, in her view, underlie the dialogue of civilizations. The Declaration of Rhodes (see *EIR*, Sept. 19, 2003) has pointed to the great threat to the larger part of the human population through the effects of globalization, for which the paradigm bound up with it is responsible. The most important basis for a new human paradigm is the universal image of man on which all can agree. While for Christendom, the conception of man as man in the image of God, was clearly defined, and from it arose the inalienable rights and worth of the human being, today’s widespread views on this theme are not at all so well settled.

Mrs. Zepp-LaRouche sketched the conceptions common today, as, for example, that man is only a higher beast, an idea to which recently an entire series of so-called “philosophical



Mrs. Zepp-LaRouche addressed the first World Forum, on Sept. 3-6, 2003 on Rhodes, Greece, where the Declaration of Rhodes called for a just new world order.



The Plenary Session of the World Public Forum “Dialogue of Civilizations” conference on May 4 in Prague’s Zofin Castle; and (inset) Schiller Institute Chairwoman Helga Zepp-LaRouche addressing the Plenary. Mrs. Zepp-LaRouche made two major presentations during the three-day conference; on the universal image of man, and on the imminence of a financial crash, and its solution.

quartets” broadcast on SAT 1 television channel were dedicated; and the claims of some geneticists that human genes prove this beast-likeness. These views can unfortunately not be put aside as insignificant expressions of cultural pessimism, because they have real implications for the process of political decision-making. Whether or not human life is valued as holy and inviolable determines, for example, whether in healthcare, cost-benefit calculations ought to play a role; or whether Argentina can be forced to pay its foreign debt, even if President Kirchner has stated that this will lead to genocide against Argentines.

There are, in the European tradition, two fundamentally different views of human nature, Mrs. Zepp-LaRouche said. One, going back to Plato and the basis of Christianity, sees man as a cognitive being, who is fundamentally distinct from all other living beings, and is the unique creature who can willfully improve the basic conditions of his life. Against this, has been the oligarchical concept that human rights belong only to a small, powerful elite, while the great preponderance of any population are suited only to the status of human cattle, slaves, helots, or peons. Most recently, the human image of the English doctrine of Hobbes, Locke, but also Mandeville, is in this tradition. On the positive side have stood Nicholas of Cusa, who saw the human individual as a microcosm of Creation; Leibniz with his concept of the Monad; and Schiller with his idea that each human being can become a beautiful soul.

Archbishop Christopher of Prague seized upon the same theme from the standpoint of the Orthodox Church: that each human individual is an icon of God, and therefore has the task to develop in God’s image and likeness. It is his mission to make this image more bright and pure. Hell is a place without love. The Inferno is a place in which human beings stand back to back, neither to see nor to communicate with one another. If human beings cannot so communicate, then this is Hell. In all cultures there are such images; they are only differently

formulated, but the general idea is accessible to all. The Archbishop thanked Mrs. Zepp-LaRouche for emphasizing the spiritual character of human beings.

The Importance of Economic Policies

After further speakers had addressed the plenary session—Gottlieb Guntern of the Creando Institute, the Ambassador of Serbia and Montenegro Ilich Alexander, Professor Schneider of the Science and Politics Institute, Professor van der Veer of Holland, British Lord Robert Sidelsky, Tolochko Petr Petrovich of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, Professor Orr of England made quite distinct presentations through several sessions—the conference divided into four working groups.

In the panel on economic issues, the former Czech Transport Minister, Dr. Antonin Peltroin, stressed the great importance of integrated economic infrastructure for the future of Europe. A series of other speakers supported that point, that the free-market economy has in no way brought social stability. Mrs. Zepp-LaRouche gave a very closely-followed presentation on the imminent systemic crash of the global financial system, and the possibility of overcoming this crash with a politics in the tradition of American President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

A great concern, expressed in a number of speakers’ contributions—for example, in the presentation by Professor Semechkin of the Russian Academy of Sciences—were the various geopolitical schemes of, for example, Zbigniew Brzezinski, to break Russia into four or five states; a development which would also mean a catastrophe for Russia’s neighbors. Such a cataclysmic eruption would also lead the EU, Japan, China, and Turkey toward a complete destabilization. Another geopolitical provocation was seen in the proposals to bring the enormous natural resources of Siberia under international control. These geopolitical scenarios spring from the same spirit that was responsible for the world war in the mid-

20th Century.

It became clear in numerous discussions around the conference, that there is a pressing need for the hope of fashioning a European future of positive dialogue, but that there is also much room for improvement. Neither the new EU members nor Russia need to be treated by the EU bureaucracy as cheap-production states or as raw materials producers; rather, their representatives have to express very clearly that they claim an equal status from the start. The different facets of the Prague conference made clear that Europe, in this time of unexampled radical change, must still do a great deal to see that the 21st Century takes a happier course than the century past.

On one thing, all the participants in Prague were in agreement: The dialogue of nations and civilizations cannot be given up. And perhaps one of the most hopeful signs for the future, was that a wide range of youth from both East and West were represented at this conference.

Plenary Session

Is There a Universal Image of Man?

by Helga Zepp-LaRouche

Helga Zepp-LaRouche is founder and Chairwoman of the international Schiller Institute. She gave this speech to the Plenary Session of the Prague conference of the World Public Forum, on May 4.

As the Rhodes Declaration dramatically pointed out: Mankind finds itself in an existential crisis, where the existence of a very large part of the human race is threatened by the presently dominating paradigm of globalization, and the need for a new more human paradigm was emphatically requested. In front of the terrible situation in Southwest Asia, and the deteriorating economic situation in many countries in the world, this becomes more urgent by the day.

Therefore, it is important to agree on the axioms which underlie the new paradigm. Obviously, the most important of these axioms is the question: What is the image of man of the new paradigm? While from the standpoint of Christianity this is clearly defined—that man is in the image of God, and derives his inalienable rights and dignity from that fact—if one looks around in the world today, that question is not so self-evident at all.

On the 16th of November last year, there was a popular

TV program on SAT-1, the German-Swiss-Austrian channel, called the “Philosophical Quartet,” with the title, “The Eat-able Zoo—of the Co-Citizen Animal.” All the four participants of this talk show—the “philosopher” Sloterijk, the biographer Ruediger Safranskim, the artist Peter Kubelka, and Thilo Bode, head of an organization called “Foodwatch”—agreed, that there is no essential difference between man and animal. Also, there is presently a flood of so-called “scientific evidence,” supposedly proving that the genes of humans and animals are almost identical, that man is just a higher ape, closely related to the pig and so forth.

While one could dismiss this as mere opinion of some cultural pessimists, unfortunately, this has real implications for the real world in which we live. If man is just a form of animal, then the sanctity of life, absolutely granted by the monotheistic religions of the world, is no longer there. If man is just a higher animal, then the value of his life is a debatable question. Especially, when the increasing economic crisis demands more budget cuts, maybe human life has to be valued from a cost-accounting standpoint. That this is not a hypothetical question, we can see, for example, in the United States with the HMO-system, where cost factors decide if it is worthwhile to treat a patient with certain treatments or not.

How is this question to be answered, when the international financial institutions are demanding that, for example, Argentina pay its foreign debt in time, even if most of this debt is completely illegitimate (Argentina has paid that debt in real terms many times), and the President of that country, Kirchner, underlines that it amounts to genocide against the Argentine people, if this debt is paid. Who is right: the international financial institutions, who demand that “the system” must be maintained, and that therefore it is legitimate to demand the “pound of flesh” Shakespeare wrote about in the “Merchant of Venice”; or the President, who defends the common good of his people? Is human life sacred or not?

Two Opposed Ideas of Mankind

In European tradition there have been two distinct traditions on this question. One, which essentially goes back to Plato, has an image of man as a cognitive being, making him absolutely distinct from all other living creatures. Here man is capable of reason, of infinite self-perfection, and with the ability to understand the laws of the universe in a better and better way. His cognitive ability enables man to continuously improve the conditions of his life through scientific discovery, and thus to increase the population potential of the Earth from a few million, circa 20,000 years ago, to presently above 6 billion people. No animal can willfully change and improve the conditions of his life. With the arrival of Christianity, the sanctity of each human life, [as in the Old Testament’s Book of *Genesis*], became explicit, even if it was not yet practically realized during the Roman Empire and the Middle Ages.

Only with the development of the idea of the sovereign nation-state in the 15th Century—the development of repre-