

Schiller Institute celebrates Council of Florence anniversary

by Nora Hamerman

In what was praised by Italian Senator Carlo Tani as a “bold and courageous initiative,” the Schiller Institute held an international seminar in Rome, Italy on May 5-6 to commemorate a turning point in the history of our civilization, the ecumenical Council of Christian churches which reached its highpoint in 1439 when the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches were dramatically reunified under the magnificent cupola of the Florence Cathedral.

The 550th anniversary of the Council of Florence—as the council which began in Ferrara in 1438 and finally ended in Rome in 1445 came to be known—provides an opportunity to reflect upon and recapture the deepest values of Western Christian civilization, pivoted around the concept of the Necessity of Progress.

“In these apocalyptic times, we must remember the old Renaissance, which lifted Europe out of the depths of the fourteenth century’s New Dark Age. We must refresh our commitment to the effective resolutions taken at the Council of Florence in 1439. We must render intelligible the principle which made those resolutions successful, despite all the opposition and setbacks of the forces assembled at that conference,” wrote the American statesman Lyndon LaRouche, in a message read to the Rome audience on May 5 by Fiorella Operto, president of the Schiller Institute in Italy, in Italian translation. Mr. LaRouche pointed to the growth of overt Satanism, the threat of mass starvation in China, the threat that the Soviets may be impelled toward war by their internal crisis, the impending holocaust in the Third World, as reasons why the principle of reason must be returned to the United States, through the joyful embrace of the historical accomplishments of the Council of Florence.

The Filioque issue

As the central such accomplishment, Schiller Institute founder Helga Zepp-LaRouche described the contribution of the German Cardinal Nicolaus of Cusa (Cusanus), the greatest scientific mind of the age, to bringing about acceptance of the *Filioque* principle by the Greek representatives of the

Eastern Roman Empire, known as Byzantium, at the Council.

The Filioque was a clarification added in the West to the Nicene Creed, which specified that the third member of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit, proceeds from both the Father *and* from the Son equally—a clause which helps to emphasize mankind’s special responsibility, in imitation of Christ, to continue the work of Creation. It had been rejected by the Byzantine church for nearly 400 years, causing a Schism between East and West and making unity against a common enemy—namely the aggressive and cruel Ottoman Turkish empire—impossible.

Today, few outside the circles of religious and cultural historians may be aware of the significance of this long-ago “theological” battle. Yet U.S. Schiller Institute president Webster Tarpley in the final speech of the conference, characterized the *Filioque* principle as one of the pillars of Western thought and pointed out that even today, there is a clear dividing line between those nations where the Filioque was accepted and where it was rejected: a division expressed in the Western European notion of individual freedom in contrast to the Russian denial of the dignity of the individual.

Contributors

Among those who contributed to the two-day Schiller Institute seminar, held at the beautiful “Sala Borromini” auditorium in the center of Rome, were two Cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church and four Senators of the Italian Republic: Their Eminences Mario Luigi Cardinal Ciappi, and Pietro Cardinal Palazzini, both experts on the Council of Florence, and current Senators Carlo Tani and Emilio Paolo Taviani, as well as former Senators Luigi Noè and Vincenzo Carollo. Senator Taviani, a former Christian Democratic minister in several governments, is vice president of the Italian Senate and heads the Italian commission which is preparing for the 500th anniversary in 1992 of the opening of the New World. Christopher Columbus’s voyage to America in 1492 was reportedly guided by the Florentine cartographer

Paolo Toscanelli, a participant in the Council of Florence.

Senator Tani, who opened the second day of the sessions in person, requested a detailed report on the proceedings of the Schiller Institute conference to circulate to government officials. He pointed out that what most contradicts the spirit of the Council today is the “ecology” movement. In Italy, the “Greens” have moved from shutting down nuclear energy to targeting the plastics industry, hunting and fishing, and agriculture, with the aim of taking the entire nation back to a Dark Age.

The conference shared with the original Council of Florence of 1439 some of the breadth of themes of far-reaching significance—for the Council of Florence had important artistic, strategic, and scientific dimensions. Particularly rich were the contributions describing the official work of the ecumenical Council, which had the task of reunifying Christendom after the Schism of nearly four centuries’ duration and bringing back into the fold some of the churches that were physically as well as doctrinally more distant.

This aspect began with the opening remarks on May 5 by Cardinal Ciappi, who is from the Dominican monastery of Santa Maria Novella in Florence where most of the working sessions of the Council were actually held.

Helga Zepp-LaRouche unfolded the “prehistory” of this Council by discussing the work of Nicolaus of Cusa at the Council of Basel, which opened in 1431 and for which Cusanus wrote his first major work, *De Concordantia Catholica*. Eventually the reigning Pope, Eugene IV, dissolved the Council to reconvene it in an Italian city in order to host also the Greek representatives. Because of his knowledge of Greek, Cusanus was selected as a key member of the delegation that traveled to Constantinople and invited the Byzantine leaders for what became the Council of Florence.

She laid special stress on the need to understand and apply in today’s world Cusanus’s concept of the *imago viva Dei* or man as the living image of God.

Father Luigi Iammarone of the Seraphicum Pontifical University in Rome, paid tribute to one of the other heroes of the Council of Florence, John Bessarion, the Metropolitan of Nicea who later became a Catholic Cardinal, for devising the compromise formula that brought the Greeks and Latins together theologically on the question of the procession of the Holy Spirit. Father Luca Kelati, the rector of the Pontifical Ethiopian College, read the text of a beautiful letter written in 1440 by the Ethiopian Church declaring allegiance to Pope Eugene IV. (In ensuing decades, the question of Ethiopian Christians being true Christians became a very critical one for bolstering the position of the anti-slavery current inside Western Europe.) Father Giorgio Zabarian, the Procurator of the Patriarchate of Cilicia of the Armenians, delivered a brief history of the impact of the Council of Florence in the Armenian Church, which also declared its adherence to the Council of Florence.

Father Michel Aoun, a Lebanese priest, added the history

of the Maronite Christians in Lebanon and their participation in the Council of Florence. A particularly fascinating intervention came from Father Isydor Patrylo, the General Superior of the Basilian Order of San Josaphat, who traced the life and work of the Metropolitan of Moscow known as Isidore of Kiev, a fervid supporter of unity with the Western Church, who was imprisoned and persecuted when he returned to Moscow. Moscow’s rejection of the Council of Florence laid the basis for the launching of the imperial doctrine of Moscow as the “Third and Final Rome”; and today, Father Patrylo stressed, although the Ukrainian Catholics are free to worship in the West, inside the Soviet Union they are persecuted.

Science and art

Just as occurred in the context of the 1439 Council, the two-day commemoration broadened its focus to treat the major human concerns of the past and present. To summarize the most striking of the many interventions:

- Father Dario Composta of the Urbaniana Pontifical University described the work of Bishop Antonino (later Saint Antonino) Pierozzi of Florence, a Dominican who did not take part in the Council, but was active in the city before and after 1439. Antonino developed the theological justification for what we would today call “productive investment,” distinguishing this from usury, and thus laying the basis for the development of modern capitalism.

- Prof. Francesco Premuda of the Engineering Department of the University of Bologna gave an inspired presentation of the “cold” fusion experiment recently carried out by Martin Fleischmann and Stanley Pons. He said that man is concretely the product of Divine Providence through the fusion process that generated the stars in the first place, and hoped that so-called cold fusion may point the way to liberate mankind, especially in Third World countries, from the political combinations that now conspire against freedom. Professor Antonio Vitale, director of the National Institute of Nuclear Physics, University of Bologna, and his colleague Prof. Antonio Bertin, physics professor, University of Bologna, who are working on experiments to test the “cold fusion” results, urged scientific rigor on such a subject and attacked the irresponsible mania of the media.

- Mrs. Rita Matteuzzi, speaking for the Italian Hunting, Fishing, and Environment Association, delivered the last of several speeches criticizing the pseudo-ecologist movement, pointing to the commandment of Genesis to man to “be fruitful and multiply, replenish the Earth and subdue it,” as exemplified in the activity of hunting. The Italian anti-hunting lobby is not concerned about the environment, she charged, but rather about putting land into the control of the oligarchical few, who can then charge exorbitant prices for its use. She also pointed out the moral degradation of those who defend the lives of all animals and are the same people who campaign for abortion of human babies. Dr. Corrado Perrone

gave an incisive polemic against the insane war by Italy's "Greenies" against plastics, while former Senator Noè, the vice president of the energy agency ENEA, spoke against the anti-nuclear campaign which is forcing Italy to become the only nation in Europe without nuclear power.

● Prof. Lando Bartoli of Florence and Dr. Paulgerd Jesberg, an architect from Hesse, West Germany, delighted the audience, which included a contingent of about 100 schoolchildren, with their highly pedagogical presentations on Renaissance architecture. Dr. Bartoli is one of the world's experts on the Brunelleschi Cupola of Florence, under which the Bull of unity between the Greek and Latin Churches was proclaimed in 1439. He presented, with the aid of slides and a small model constructed by the Schiller Institute's Claudio Rossi, a discussion of the method of construction of the dome without a supporting structure of heavy wooden scaffolding or a clay mold, by means of "herringbone" brickwork and applying the principle of what were called "crests and sail" construction, embedding the geometry of a spherical dome within a nonspherical "pavilion" vault raised over an octagonal base.

Dr. Jesberg, editor of the review *Baukultur*, showed the work of the 15th century artist Filarete, who commemorated the Council of Florence in his bronze doors for St. Peter's basilica in Rome. Filarete became one of the great urban designers of his day, author of a treatise that shows how cities should be built for a higher level of civilization.

Present implications

Time did not permit the Schiller Institute seminar to fully address the strategic side of the Council of Florence, which was convened under the pressure of the urgent need to defend Constantinople from conquest by the Turks. But the president of the Italian Schiller Institute, Fiorella Operto, pointed to the genocide now occurring in Lebanon at the hands of Syria and with the complicity of particularly the U.S. as well as other Western governments, as the parallel issue that must be addressed today, as "the failure to defend Constantinople was the great error of that time."

The conference heard two appeals on Lebanon: Dr. Victor Trad, of the Foundation of Social Solidarity, who detailed the current horrors in Lebanon, particularly against the Christian population; and Dr. Alfredo Jalife, of the Lebanese Maronite community of Mexico, who linked the policy in Lebanon to a series of what he called "hoaxes": the hoax of so-called ecology, the hoax of *perestroika*, the hoax of Kissinger's Trilateral Commission, and the hoax of Bush administration foreign policy based on imposing crippling debt upon its Ibero-American allies. The double standard in Washington goes far beyond the Lebanon policy *per se*, Jalife emphasized. He blasted the alliance between the "satanic Trilateral" of the Middle East, made up of Assad, Qaddafi, and Khomieni, and the Western Trilateral Commission.

At the prompting of Helga Zepp-LaRouche, the confer-

ence passed a resolution condemning Syrian actions in Lebanon and calling upon Western governments to take action to kick out the Syrian force and restore peace to Lebanon.

The LaRouche question

Webster Tarpley brought to a focus the burning question that had been raised by many speakers at the conference: the barbaric imprisonment of Lyndon LaRouche, condemned to life in prison in the United States for political "crimes." Tarpley delivered greetings from Mr. LaRouche as well as from six fellow prisoners, William Wertz, Edward Spannaus, Dennis Small, Michael Billington, Joyce Rubinstein, and Paul Greenberg. He also brought the greetings of Rochelle Ascher, sentenced to 86 years in jail for having solicited loans for political causes.

Because LaRouche has contributed so much to rediscovering the treasures of our civilization, as well as to the frontiers of scientific and economic thinking today, his current situation came up repeatedly during the proceedings. Senator Vincenzo Carollo during his speech on the New World Economic Order had raised a plea for reversing the injustice done to LaRouche, and this was the main theme of the contribution by the French-Iranian historian Dr. Ali Mazaheri, professor emeritus at the French Higher School of Social Science and author of numerous books on medieval history. Dr. Bartoli cited his gratitude to Mr. and Mrs. LaRouche for their enthusiastic interest in his battle to save the Florentine dome of Brunelleschi, and expressed outrage at the jailing of LaRouche.

Dr. Bruno Barosi, director of the acoustical physics laboratory of the Cremona International Institute of Violin Making, praised LaRouche's initiating role in the campaign for returning to the standard tuning pitch mandated by natural law, in which middle C is set at 256 Hertz.

Attorney Mirella Cece, president of the European Christian-Liberal Movement, delivered an impassioned plea to participants to work for the freedom of LaRouche and his associates, a fight in which she is personally playing a leading role in Europe.

Tarpley stressed that under the present conditions of the failure of *perestroika* and the eruption of revolutionary ferment throughout the Soviet bloc, the Russian empire is more dangerous than ever. LaRouche's leadership, and the reversal of the trend to fascism in the United States, are therefore more urgent than ever.

Helga Zepp-LaRouche called upon participants to reflect on the contents of the conference in order to draw internal strength for the tasks ahead. "Putting Lyn in jail with drug pushers is not a reflection on Lyn, but it says something about the United States," she said, referring to her husband. By imitating Christ, as we have learned from this conference, we can find the strength that will make it possible to free him and to defeat the openly Satanic forces which are organizing for evil, the Schiller Institute founder said.