

Zepp-LaRouche Urges 'Dialogue of Cultures'

The following call was issued on Oct. 15, 2001 by Helga Zepp-LaRouche, president of the Schiller Institute in Germany. It was entitled, "Invitation To Participate In An International Correspondence For A 'Dialogue Of Cultures.' "

The horror-vision of a "Clash of Civilizations" has, unfortunately, since the attacks in the United States and the military strikes against Afghanistan, already begun to become a reality. Whatever may be uncovered as the truth behind the attacks, any further spiral of violence will cause a collapse of humanity into a New Dark Age.

In this situation, it is all the more urgent, to define anew the basis within reason and universal principles, which instead make possible a "Dialogue of Cultures" and an ecumenical understanding among the religions on the highest level. Such a dialogue were also necessary if, after a period of continuous violence, and decades or even a century of war, the community of peoples is to be reconstructed and nation-states to be rebuilt from the ruins.

But in order to avert such unspeakable misery of many millions of people, let us hope, that such a dialogue can help to deepen the understanding between cultures, in time to prevent the worst.

Even though there are many differences between the situation in 1453, when Constantinople was conquered by Mo-

ammed II, and today's attacks, and although the background to the attacks in the United States represents a completely different phenomenon, the reference to this date is, from one important viewpoint, reasonable.

At a moment when lesser spirits were screaming for revenge and retaliation, Nicolaus of Cusa, the 600th anniversary of whose birth we celebrate this year, wrote, under the impression of news of the horrors, his magnificent piece *De Pace Fidei* (*On The Peace Of Faith*). This dialogue, in which Nicolaus had representatives of 17 religions and nations participate, can, also today, show us the way.

Nicolaus begins *De Pace Fidei* with the following words: "The news of the atrocities which have recently been perpetrated by the Turkish King in Constantinople and have now been divulged, has so inflamed a man, who once saw that region, with zeal for God [Nicolaus is talking about himself and his journey to the city], that amongst many sighs he asked the Creator of all things if in His kindness He might moderate the persecution, which raged more than usual on account of diverse religious rites. Then it occurred that after several days—indeed, on account of lengthy, continuous meditation—a vision was manifested to the zealous man, from which he concluded that it would be possible, through the experience of a few wise men who are well acquainted with all the diverse practices which are observed in religions across the world, to find a unique and propitious concordance, and through this to constitute a perpetual peace in religion upon the appropriate and true course."

Nicolaus then presents the representatives of the 17 religions and nations in a dialogue with the "Word of God," as all conflicts among them always erupted in His name. As most people lived in poverty, in great drudgery, and in slavish dependency upon their masters, they would by no means have



Helga Zepp-LaRouche and Cardinal Nicolaus of Cusa. Cusa lifted up his mind from the horror and despair around the 1453 fall of Constantinople, to grasp in a new way the reason shared by men of all faiths, as the principle of ecumenicism and of the "peace of faith."

the leisure to use their free will and to develop their own cognitive powers. The concerns of daily life would divert them too much from the search for the Hidden God. But if an assembly of wise men of the different religions could come together, then the solution would be “simple.”

Nicolaus’ solution is conceived from the standpoint of *coincidentia oppositorum* (the coincidence of opposites) “from above.” One fault would be, to fail to distinguish between the prophets and God Himself, and otherwise to mistake the traditions, to which one is accustomed, with the truth. In that God addresses the representatives of the religions, as wise men, He easily succeeds in convincing them, that there is only *one* wisdom and *one* truth.

The oldest of the participating representatives of the religions, a Greek, asks, how to bring together the diversity of religions, since they would hardly accept one new united religion, as they had defended their own with their blood. The Word of God answers, that they should not introduce any new religion, but that the true religion lies *before* all other religions. The peace bringing new unity of religion is not a synthetic, new belief, but rather what is reasonable to reason, as soon as reason becomes conscious of its premises. The Greek representative reacts enthusiastically over the “spirit of reason” (*spiritus rationalis*), who is “capable of wonderful arts” (*capax artium mirabilium*), from which comes human perfectability. If this spirit is oriented toward wisdom, he can approach her more and more. He will never reach absolute wisdom, but come closer and closer to her, and to him she will taste as an eternal food. The unity is then attainable, if all spirits are oriented toward wisdom and truth, and this truth is recognized as primary and basic.

The Cusan approach is therefore totally different from the modern pantheistic or phenomenological forms of ecumenical dialogue, in which the existence of the one knowable truth is denied, in favor of a democratic plurality of religious opinions. This dialogue can only have success, if all participants start from a view of man, which understands man as a “living image of God” (*imago viva Dei*) whose likeness to God consists in the fact that his potentially infinitely perfectable cognitive capabilities can always better understand the lawfulness of the order of creation, and with the application of this cognition, can improve the living standards of all men, and increase the population potential of the Earth.

Pope John Paul II has, after all, by his most recent journeys, stressed, that there is no alternative to such an ecumenical dialogue on the highest level.

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Six Million Afghans Threatened By War

by Mary Burdman

As the massive U.S. and British bombing of Afghanistan continued for the second week, the possibility that *many millions* of Afghani people will starve, and die of hunger, cold, and disease in the rapidly approaching Winter, becomes more real by the day. This catastrophe is not the immediate result of the relentless bombing campaign. Afghanistan has suffered 22 years of continuous warfare and one collapsing government after the other; it has been, during that time, reduced to one of the poorest nations in the world. The average life-span in Afghanistan is now just 40 years; a child born there is *25 times* more likely to die before it reaches age five than if it were born in the United States or Europe.

Afghanistan is a nation where 85% of the population depends upon agriculture to survive. In the past three years, the worst drought in living memory has destroyed grain and fruit production and animal husbandry: This year, in many areas, there was total crop failure. Overall, the harvest was 50% below normal. People have been sacrificing their herds, and have no future livelihood. Opium production and trafficking, and weapons trafficking to the opposing Taliban and Northern Alliance forces, are almost all that is left of economy in this country of 24 million people.

The looming catastrophe is no surprise. This past June, the United Nations World Food Program (WFP), warned that 5 million people in Afghanistan would soon face starvation. Crops dependent upon rainfall were failing, while the essential irrigation system — which dates back, in some areas, more than a thousand years — was collapsing. The country already had a grain shortfall of more than 2 million tons, and the herds of sheep, camels, and other livestock were also facing starvation.

The already-impoorished population was rapidly being reduced to destitution. Famine conditions were emerging all over the country, the WFP reported; millions of people could survive only if they got international aid. In Afghanistan, the WFP was already feeding 3.8 million people last Summer, twice as many as a year ago, and ever-more urgent efforts were necessary to get food into the country for the Winter. More and more people were fleeing their homes, to seek whatever food and shelter they could find, either in the cities, or across the borders. There were already some 1 million internal refugees in Afghanistan, and this number will rise again this Winter. Due to the years of warfare, there are already 2 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan, and 1.4 million in Iran, all des-