

Who is shooting at Christopher Columbus?

by Liliana Celani

The Pontifical Urbaniana University, looking down to Saint Peter's Square from the Janiculum Hill in Rome, hosted on May 26, in its "John Paul II" auditorium, an international conference of the Schiller Institute entitled "Christopher Columbus: Science and Evangelization in the Discovery of the New World." The conference, attended by a qualified audience of university professors, students, representatives of various religious orders, and diplomats and journalists from all over the world, was opened by His Eminence Cardinal Silvio Oddi, who greeted the Schiller Institute initiative "aimed at reviving the Christian and scientific roots of the great Columbus discovery," and reminded his audience that "on Oct. 12, His Holiness John Paul II will celebrate in Santo Domingo the 500th anniversary of the evangelization of America" on the side of Columbus, "this Genoese, who in the last years of his life chose to wear the habit of the Third Order of the Franciscans and to die with it, and to whom we owe the opening of a new world to civilization and faith," as the pope himself said.

Asking why it was that a Christian found the New World, Cardinal Oddi rejected "the slanders coming from all sides against this 500th anniversary. They reflect a widespread cultural and ethical relativism which afflicts the modern world, and raise the suspicion that behind this campaign there are undeclared, hidden motives coherent with a neo-colonial recrudescence."

Three telegrams welcoming the conference were read to participants. The first, which drew applause, was from newly elected President of the Italian Republic Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, known to be very religious and close to the pope, who excused his absence "due to known institutional tasks," and expressed his "enthusiastic support" for the conference. The second came from another member of the Christian Demo-

cratic Party, Sen. Paolo Emilio Taviani, author of many books on Columbus, and the last came from Archbishop of Genoa Cardinal Canestri, a member of the Commission for the Columbus Celebrations.

The two presentations of the morning session made clear why the Schiller Institute conference in defense of Columbus was not a mere academic celebration. Paolo Vitali located the discovery of America in the religious and scientific revolution of the Renaissance, starting from the 13th-century Franciscan revolution and the great missionary-explorers of the 13-14th century, and including the role of Francesco Petrarca, the Italian poet and diplomat, and the rediscovery of the ancient world. Vitali identified in particular the Renaissance scientists Paolo dal Pozzo Toscanelli and L.B. Alberti in Florence, and their German friend Cardinal Nicolaus of Cusa, as leaders of a new scientific methodology which took the name of perspective, affecting not only painting and architecture, but all fields of knowledge.

Vitali saw Toscanelli and Cusa as the prophets of this revolution, in geography, philosophy, and all sciences, which laid the basis for the pioneer Columbus. The fundamental role of the great Portuguese Prince Henry the Navigator, with his school of Sagres, a kind of NASA of the 15th century, was cited as the preparation for this project. Vitali also unmasked the falsehoods regarding Columbus and his astronomical knowledge, such as the allegation that he thought the world was one-quarter smaller than it actually is. He showed that Columbus not only was a maritime genius, but also had a profound knowledge of astronomy and culture.

That his discovery could only have come by a superior method of thinking and image of man was proven by Helga Zepp-LaRouche, president of the Schiller Institute in Germany, who spoke after Vitali on "Columbus and the Christian

Image of Man.” She opened her speech with a comparison between Columbus and her husband, Lyndon LaRouche, “who has been sitting innocent in jail as a political prisoner of George Bush for the last three years, and whom I thought was the most slandered person in the world until I realized . . . that with the flood of slanders against Columbus and the Catholic Church, he is getting serious competition.”

Mrs. LaRouche proved how untrue the Black Legend is, which accuses Columbus and the evangelizers of destroying a preexisting, superior culture, and is being used today to justify a malthusian genocide in Ibero-America and the Third World, as expressed by the Earth Summit taking place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. There was particular interest in her argument that the population density of Mexico at the time of the Aztecs, with their human sacrifices and backward technological state, could never have been as high as demographers Woodrow Borah and Shelbourne F. Cook claim, when they speak of a massacre of 20 million people between 1519 and 1560. “One of the central concepts of the economic scientist Lyndon LaRouche is the concept of potential relative population density, which sheds new light on Borah’s and Cook’s statements,” proving that the population of Mexico could only have been 2.5 million people, and that the population density only increased, as Alexander von Humboldt reported in the 19th century, with the technological improvements introduced by the Spanish colonization.

A professor and demographer from La Sapienza University in Rome confirmed this hypothesis and added that more recent demographic studies on Ibero-America, led by Stanford University, prove the case of Humboldt. He thanked Mrs. LaRouche for her philosophical exposé, which sparked a lively debate on Aristotle versus Plato, and confirmed that the scientific revolution which started with the Italian Renaissance could not have been possible “had the philosophy of Aristotle not been abandoned.”

Plato versus Aristotle

This was precisely the point Mrs. LaRouche made. She proved not only that there was a close connection between Toscanelli, Columbus, and Fernão Martins, canonical of the Lisbon Cathedral, “who often met in Cusa’s house in St. Peter in Chains in Rome to discuss the idea that the ocean may be used as a waterway between the continents, including the southern hemisphere,” but that their discussions were based on the superiority of Plato’s method over Aristotle and Ptolemy. To Henry Vignaud’s argument that Fernão Martins never existed, and that there was no connection between Toscanelli and Columbus, she counterposed Cusa’s *The Non-Other*, a dialogue between Cusa, several other humanists, and “the Portuguese Fernão Martins.” “Highly interesting,” she said, “is also the fact that in this Socratic dialogue, the abbot addresses Fernão as someone who is studying the method of thinking of Aristotle. Cusa continues the dialogue with Fernão trying to define the concept of God as the ‘non-Other,’

and in so doing picks up the critique of St. Bonaventure against Aristotle, who conceived the creatures of Nature, that is, each Other, as if they had a substantial, independent Being.” It was Cusa’s concept of man as *imago viva Dei* (in the living image of God), which made the evangelization possible, and which inspired Columbus and the true missionaries, as opposed to the abusers, concluded Mrs. LaRouche.

In the debate which followed, it became clear that Aristotle missed the ontological concept of the origin of man, and because of his methodological flaws, also ended up justifying slavery, as he does in his book *Politics*.

The afternoon presentation of Prof. Don Dario Composta, professor of theology of law at the Urbaniana University, counterposed three centuries of “Church teaching against slavery from the 15th to the 17th century,” to Aristotle’s justification of slavery, focusing in particular on Pope Eugene IV (1431-1447), “who not only organized the Councils of Ferrara and Florence for the Union of the Churches, but also dealt with what happened outside Europe.” In 1434, he issued the papal letter *Creator Omnium*, condemning slavery and threatening to excommunicate all those who kept inhabitants of the Canary Islands as slaves.

Similar interventions against slavery followed with Pope Pius II (1458-1464), Sixtus IV (1471-1484), Alexander VI, the Spanish pope under whom the discovery of the Americas took place in 1492, and who issued the papal letter *Inter Cetera* on May 4, 1493 congratulating the Catholic monarchs for the discoveries and evangelization and reaffirming the freedom of the aborigines “based on natural law as conceived by St. Thomas Aquinas and not Aristotle.” After Pope Alexander VI, it was Pope Paul III who, with his papal letter *Veritas Ipsa*, condemned every form of slavery, reestablishing the principle that Indians, whatever their faith may be, cannot be deprived of freedom. Don Dario Composta’s documented presentation concluded with the intervention against slavery by Pope Pius V in 1567, who called on all Catholic kings and missionaries to abstain from slavery.

The afternoon session began with a presentation on the neo-colonial intent of those who attack Columbus by Elisabeth Hellenbroich, just back from a conference in Tlaxcala, Mexico (see *EIR*, June 5, and remarks from that conference which follow) who was quoted at length in a Spanish news agency EFE release on the conference published in a number of Ibero-American papers. It ended with a presentation by Father Fidel González Fernández, professor of church history at the Urbaniana University, who gave an historical overview of the evangelization of Ibero-America, where half of the members of the Catholic Church worldwide live, and which was defined by Pope John Paul II the “continent of hope.” Father González located in legal documents, still in the course of being published, the process of encounter of the two worlds, and the role of the Spanish and Portuguese legislation in this respect, and called for the creation of an Institute of Studies of the Ibero-American Church History.

Integration of continent must soon be achieved

On May 18, Prof. Adan Chávez, a teacher of physics at a Venezuelan university and the brother of Lt. Col. Hugo Chávez Frías, leader of the rebellion against Venezuela President Carlos Andrés Pérez on Feb. 4, gave the following message to the founding conference of the Ibero-American Solidarity Movement (MSI) in Tlaxcala, Mexico on May 18-22.

I am very pleased, tremendously moved to be in this meeting with you. I am grateful for the invitation extended by the *compañeros* in Venezuela, from the office in Caracas.

It truly is an indescribable experience: For the first time I have felt—with the contact with you, in feeling the grasps of your hands, the embraces of solidarity which you have been offering since our arrival yesterday afternoon—I have felt for the first time, in truth, the people of Ibero-America as a single heartbeat. That is truly indescribable and priceless. I want you to receive a greeting, a great Bolivarian salute from my brother, Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías, Commander Chávez Frías, and all the other commanders, officers, and subalterns that are jailed in the prisons of Venezuela for the action they undertook on Feb. 4.

It is a Bolivarian and revolutionary greeting, and a greeting of hope, a shout of hope for all the peoples of Ibero-America and the world, with the certain confidence that we will truly achieve what has been talked about this morning, that is the integration of Ibero-America to save our nations from disaster.

I will read two documents prepared by the military men involved in the action of Feb. 4. One of them is a summary of the philosophical basis of the Revolutionary Bolivarian 200 movement, as the movement they lead is named, and the other is a sort of presentation that my brother drafted specifically for this moment with the desire of making our position very clear, because in this movement there are not only the imprisoned military men, there are military men who are not in prison, there is a great civic movement, in which I fortunately find myself, and there is also a great number of religious people, so to speak. That is, our movement is a civic-military-religious movement, the Bolivarian Revolutionary Movement 200, as it is called.

Through the national and international press, you may have noted that there has arisen, as always happens in these cases, as has happened with other movements, attempts by the enemy to distort the philosophical, political, economic, cultural, moral, etc., stance of the movements that are devel-

oping among those people of Ibero-America. Thus, with the aim of making clear what is the stance of our movement, I will read these two working papers. With that [I express] the wish—as I already feel it inside and as I have told some of you with whom I have been able to talk in the few hours we have been here, I feel that there are many points of convergence in all these movements that are coming into being—that we will soon achieve, within a very short period of time, the great integration of Ibero-America.

'Our struggle is against the power of darkness'

Dom Manuel Pestana Filho, diocesan bishop of Anapolis, Brazil, sent the following message to the participants in the MSI conference.

Brothers and sisters:

"At the heart of each political, economic, human problem, there is a religious, metaphysical, problem," said De Maistre, if I recall correctly.

For St. Paul, our struggle is not against the flesh and the blood, but against the power of darkness (Eph. 6:12).

St. John situated this better than anyone, by confronting in his visions the bloody and unceasing struggles of evil against the good.

We live in a truly apocalyptic era, in which the enemy of God attempts through all means to destroy man, image and likeness of the Creator.

Only the implacable hatred against Him explains the diabolical and systematic dismantling of all the Christian values that have always favored the greatness and elevation of man.

Politics, economics, science, communications, and leisure today know only one light: the black sun of Satan.

Those who have undertaken the joyous initiative of convening this congress, do good by calling on all men of goodwill, on those who do not adore the beast and who have not allowed themselves to be marked with its name and number, to join forces in the faith and in courage, to awaken our poor and wretched humanity from the suicidal stupor that is leading it quietly to the slaughterhouse.

It is urgent to heed the call of the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, to regain Latin America, hope of the world, for the Christian world.

Let us defend its people and all its cultural and religious patrimony, from those who hate the poor and despise the Third World, to the extent that they dream of destroying it through an implacable and true genocide, so that it does not disturb their sleep, but, instead, increase their wealth and power.

May the Lord God of the Hosts of Mary, she who crushed the head of the serpent, light, guide, and protect your struggle for God and the faith.