

born of Norwegian immigrant parents, in England). One moment I recall, was in early 2000, when he told me, “Well, at least we got rid of Boris Yeltsin; not bad for two lads!” He was bubbling over with delight at Yeltsin’s fall, as he had detested the corruption and the venality of the Yeltsin years. But the “joke” was, that he had recently come out of hospital intensive care, and knowing that I had also overcome some health difficulties, he was tickled, that “we lads” had accomplished so much!

Later, in 2000, he commented that the policies of the West were like a Marx Brothers movie, and that “this current club running policy in most Western countries, reminds me of Groucho Marx’s famous comment, ‘I wouldn’t want to be a member of a club in which I was a member.’ It would all be hilarious, if the world situation weren’t becoming so tragic.”

In recent years, Erickson increasingly expressed his respect for, and agreement with, the evaluations of Lyndon LaRouche, on the global financial and economic collapse, and on the dangerous nature of the situation. He publicly endorsed the appeal for LaRouche’s exoneration, and later, signed the statement of the Ad Hoc Committee for a New Bretton Woods. Although not an economist, he was deeply troubled by the injustices of the global economic system, and shared LaRouche’s conviction that the rapidly accelerating economic crisis was the driving force behind the unstable strategic situation. On many occasions, he would say that LaRouche was one of the few statesmen alive, who had any conception of the nature of the historical conjuncture the world was living through.

There is one matter that is of the highest importance in understanding John Erickson and his accomplishments. That is his wife, Ljubica. She was, since their marriage in 1957, his most intimate collaborator, sharing in all his work, including research, correspondence, and a wide range of other matters that would take pages to describe. It was our honor to have met her as well. Our most poignant recollection, in addition to her devotion to her husband and his work, was her expression of moral outrage, as someone born in Yugoslavia of Serbian origin, at the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia, and at the hypocrisy about the “humanitarian” reasons cited for doing so.

Erickson is survived also by two children, Mark and Anna-Joanna, and two grandchildren, as well as by students all over the globe who have benefitted from having learned from him. I would be honored, to be included among them.

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OIC, EU Unite vs. Clash Of Civilizations Crowd

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Faced with the prospect of a new war launched by the United States in the name of the “war against terrorism,” this time against Iraq, what can be done? How can one prevent a global “Clash of Civilizations,” which was the strategic aim of the perpetrators behind the Sept. 11 attempted coup? Growing numbers of individual political figures—in Europe, Russia, Asia, and the Arab world—are voicing their opposition.

What is required, is that an utterly contrary, positive conception of relations among states and peoples be put forward, and be pursued in concrete actions, by institutions representing those peoples and cultures, which the war-mongers would pit against one another.

Thus, it is highly significant that the foreign ministers of the European Union (EU) and the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) convened a conference in Istanbul, Turkey, dedicated precisely to this proposition. It was on the initiative of the Turkish government, shortly after the events of Sept. 11, to invite the OIC and EU to a joint forum, to establish a counterpole to the drive for a Clash of Civilizations. The joint forum, on Feb. 12-13, brought together representatives, mainly at the foreign minister level, from 71 countries, plus delegations from the OIC and EU per se, as well as the Arab League, the Council of Europe, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Three issues dominated the conference: the events of Sept. 11, and the general condemnation of terrorism in all forms; the rejection of unilateral military action by the United States, especially against Iraq; and the need to establish durable, just peace in the Middle East.

No to Military Action Against Iraq

The representatives of the host country, Turkey, were outspoken. One day prior to the conference opening, Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit warned the United States, saying: “We don’t want a military action against Iraq.” In his address to the conference, Ecevit struck an optimistic note, expressing his conviction that the Clash of Civilizations has been rejected by actual political developments. Ecevit cited the “famous British writer and poet Rudyard Kipling” who “claimed that the destiny of East and West was to stay apart and different.” “This prediction reflected the mentality and strategy of certain imperialist powers,” Ecevit said. “These powers tried to keep away the East, the countries of Asia and Africa, from the cultural, scientific, and economic successes

of imperialism, and to protect the latter's political and economic superiority. Yet the end of imperialism started to decrease the cultural differences, and opened the way to scientific, economic, technological progress. I believe that in this respect the argument of a Clash of Civilizations has lost its validity in considerable extent, and the way to East and West to unite in all respects has been opened."

Ecevit noted that ideological clashes in certain geographical areas have been replaced by religious conflicts. He noted that, since religion resides more deeply in the soul than ideology, wars based on religion can be more dangerous than those based on ideology. Although, he said, the group identified with Sept. 11 allegedly acted in the name of Islam, "this is a deception, which cannot be accepted and cannot be tolerated. The world would be divided dangerously if the Islamic countries did not immediately react to this claim, and if the Christian countries did not avoid . . . identifying this activity with Islam. Such a disaster was prevented, thanks to God."

"This joint forum in Istanbul," Ecevit added, "which is a Eurasian metropolis, proves the resolution of humanity to resist terrorism and to prevent religious clashes."

'War on Terrorism' Is Being Misused

The foreign ministers of Iran and Iraq were most explicit in their denunciation of U.S. exploitation of the anti-terror fight. Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazzi acknowledged the "international disgust" provoked by the Sept. 11 attacks, and endorsed the international fight against terrorism. "But, unfortunately," he said, "certain U.S. politicians are misusing the international solidarity with the American people, by taking advantage of [the] international resolve to fight terrorism, for their foreign policy objectives. They embarked on accusing other nations of links with terrorists, spreading false information to mislead the international community."

This referred to Bush's claim that Iran supports international terrorism. Kharazzi warned that the U.S. response would boomerang. "Iran believes that [the] military approach in dealing with terrorism will jeopardize international peace and security," he said. To defeat this "unilateral and militarist approach" which "can erode the movement against terrorism," Kharazzi pleaded the case for dialogue. It was, in fact, Iranian President Seyyed Mohammad Khatami who first launched the proposal for the UN to declare the year 2001, the year of the Dialogue Among Civilizations.

"The current developments prove the necessity and impact of [the] dialogue of civilizations," Kharazzi said. "The human being cannot ignore the need for a dialogue of civilizations. . . . If we are courageous enough to administer justice, peace, and freedom to all human beings, [the] dialogue of civilizations serves as [a] strategy for the human community. . . . We should develop a sense of courage in our own character, not to make enemies out of those who are different from us, and, as President Khatami pointed out, we should form a coalition for peace rather than a coalition for war."

Iraqi Foreign Minister Naji al-Hadithi Sabri, whose country is next on the target list, called for a rigorous definition of terrorism to be articulated, which his country believes should be a "global definition," i.e., not one-sided. Naji denounced the United States for state terrorism, referring to the continuing bombings of Iraq by U.S. and U.K. aircraft. He also said that the great restrictions imposed on Iraq, through the 12-year-old sanctions regime, had created a situation in which "every kind of opportunity for stability and development is being taken out of our hands." Naji, like his Iranian counterpart, urged a just solution for the Palestinian people.

Peace in the Middle East

The pursuit of peace in the Middle East was a leading agenda item. EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana said that the only solution would be the establishment of a Palestinian state: "A two-states solution is the only solution that can bring peace. It's the only possible way to move ahead, and we are determined to work in this direction." The conference approved a proposal presented by French Foreign Minister Hubert Védrine for the creation of a Palestinian state, to be recognized immediately by Israel and admitted to the UN.

The EU-OIC final joint communiqué said that the terrible events of Sept. 11 had "sparked growing consciousness of the need for all sides to discuss and attempt to better understand the differences in perceptions, values, and interests, as well as to promote tolerance and appreciation for cultural diversity." The conference expressed its conviction that "cultures, in their diversity, complement and enhance one another," and that "harmony among civilizations" is desirable and attainable. Furthermore, "the main means to support coherence and solidarity and to avoid racial, religious, and cultural prejudices is to enhance our knowledge of one another through communication and cooperation for the promotion of common universal values."

Regarding the Middle East in particular, "The Forum underlined that for peace, stability, and harmony to prevail, the Middle East conflict must be settled in a just and comprehensive manner and in accordance with international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions. In this context, the 'two state' solution will contribute to bring peace and security to the peoples concerned."

In short, the entire OIC membership, which includes more than 50 Islamic countries and the European Union have come together in principled agreement for a viable peace in the Middle East. Considered on the backdrop of Washington's de facto green light for Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) to wreak havoc, this statement by the OIC-EU is of great political weight.

It appears, from the final declaration, that the Istanbul event was not a one-time affair. The conference agreed to organize another OIC-EU meeting in the second half of the year, in Doha, Qatar, currently the seat of the rotating chairman of the OIC.