

Rhodes Dialogue: Common Good Is Aim Of Economic Activity

by Helga Zepp-LaRouche

Oct. 16—The strength of the seventh annual conference of the World Public Forum in Rhodes, Greece, which met Oct. 8-12, lies in the fact that it emphasizes the concept of a “Dialogue of Civilizations,” for solving problems. Again, this year, it gathered over 500 academics, religious leaders, economists, politicians, artists, and journalists, from 60 countries, to discuss various subjects.

While last year’s conference, also in October, was strongly impacted by the dramatic development of the financial crisis, just after the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers, the mood among many conference participants this year, was one of deep skepticism toward the official line, claiming that, “the worst is over,” and, of a certain foreboding that the main brunt of the crisis has yet to hit.

The environment of the conference was in stark contrast to the reality of the strategic and historical situation; debates and many productive discussions took place here, in the quaint fishing village of Kallithea on the Aegean island of Rhodes, while, in the rest of the world, the collapse of the real economy continued apace, “irrational exuberance” was once again sweeping the financial markets, and financial institutions left no doubt of their intention to have the world’s people pay for the crisis, by brutally cutting living standards.

Participants explicitly expressed the conviction that the current global crisis is a result of the fact, that so many decision-makers have reneged on their responsibility for the common good. In the final discussion of the concluding plenary session, one participant was broadly supported when she said that the current crisis is due, in large part, to the crisis in leadership among the established elites.



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LaRouche is joined here by some of the other speakers and participants at the Rhodes Forum; he is seated, second from left; Helga Zepp-LaRouche is standing, far left.

The final declaration states:

Point 2.1: “The global economic and financial crisis has not ended yet. It is obvious that this crisis cannot be fought with the traditional economic and financial tools only.”

Point 2.4: “The ultimate target of all economic activities should be the common good of human beings and not the agglomeration of capital. The focus of economics should be on the benefit and the bounty that the economy produces, on how to let this bounty increase, and how to share the benefits justly among the people for the common good.”

Call for ‘New Ethics in Economy’

Noteworthy, is a reference to the latest encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI, in Point 2.5:

“We need new ethics in economy instead of prevailing consumerism on the one hand and unbridled free-market capitalism which culminates in so-called shareholders values on the other.”

Point 2.8: “We welcome the call of many religious leaders for ethics in economy, and, in particular, that of Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical letter *Caritas in Veritate* for a civil economy re-embedded in civil society that transcends the old secular dichotomies of

state versus market and left versus right.”

The most concrete proposal for creating a civil economy was made by Lyndon LaRouche, who is very well-known in Russia for his theory of physical economy, and whose contribution this year was commented upon by Russian experts. The speech that this author gave to the 2008 conference, on the LaRouche Plan (see *EIR*, Oct. 16) for reorganization of the financial and economic systems, was published in the 2009 Conference Bulletin.

Various participants in the discussion this year said they thought that the G20 Summit in Pittsburgh, Sept. 24-25, was nothing more than a PR operation, and, that the measures taken had simply postponed the death of the system for a time. An important theme was the awareness that the global crisis demands a new definition of the notion “happiness,” and that the answer to this question is not to be found in the material domain, but on a spiritual level.

The initiators of the World Public Forum—Vladimir Yakunin, president of the Russian Railways; Jagdish Kapur, chairman of the Kapur Surya Foundation in India; and Greek businessman Nicholas F.S. Papanicolaou—deserve thanks for having founded the “Dialogue of Civilizations.”